4-1940

The Cresset (Vol. 3, No. 6)

International Walther League

APRIL 1940

THE CRESSET

An Ominous Spring

The Flirt

Candle in the Dark

A Pastor Looks At Life

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE, THE ARTS, AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

VOL. 3 NO. 6

Twenty-five Cents

The CRESSET

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Volume 3 APRIL, 1940 Number 6

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THE CRESSET is published monthly by the International Walther League. Publication office: 450 Ahnaip Street, Menasha, Wisconsin. Editorial and subscription office: 6438 Eggleston Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Entered as second class matter October 25, 1937, at the post office at Menasha, Wisconsin, under the act of March 3, 1879. Subscriptions for United States and possessions, $2.00 per year; elsewhere, $2.50 per year.

Volume 3 APRIL, 1940 Number 6

THE CRESSET

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE, THE ARTS, AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NOTES and COMMENT

An Ominous Spring—Food for Thought—Bouquet—The Farmer's Wife—The Flirt—and more.

By THE EDITORS

An Ominous Spring

THE CRESSET is not given to uttering prophecies concerning either the conduct or the outcome of the terrible holocausts now raging in many parts of the world; but many signs point to the Balkans and the Near East as battlefields on which decisive blows will be struck. As a result, thousands upon thousands of men, women, and children who live in these sections of the globe are dreading the advent of the spring season. We hear that Russia has massed large forces along the frontiers of Iran and Afghanistan; and evidently neither the British nor the French censors have even tried to prevent us from learning that for some time there have been huge Anglo-French troop-concentrations in the Near East. Stalin is reported to have given orders to construct formidable fortifications in the Caucasus and to mine the strategically important Black Sea. A frantic but cleverly calculated maneuvering for favorable positions and propitious opportunities is in progress. Perhaps Sumner Welles may be able to bring about a peace parley before either side decides to strike; but many believe that his efforts are foredoomed to dismal failure.

There are numerous reasons for looking upon the Balkans as the solar plexus of Europe. We remember that the last war broke out in this tragedy-scarred peninsula, and, as we reflect on the checkered course events have taken since the beginning of the present

in Gold Canyon, Nevada, by the simple process of washing the mineral-bearing earth in a rocker, and he found that his claim of ten feet covered a portion of the Comstock Lode. Adjoining was a claim of the same dimensions belonging to Mrs. Cowan, who also resided in the canyon and was washing and cooking for the miners. The two married, and the claims became one, proving of extraordinary richness. In a few years they were overwhelmed with wealth. Too ignorant of business, they knew nothing of prudent or cautious investments, and became the tools of harpies. The now-wealthy people were advised—as a good joke—to take a tour through Europe to see the sights and become polished in accordance with the station they were in the future to occupy. They were also advised to build a palace worthy of such a party to reside in. Accordingly, in 1861, the Bowers Mansion was commenced in the wilderness of Washoe Valley. Before leaving for Europe Sandy was told that the proper thing to do was to give a banquet. "Banquet goes," said Sandy, and the International Hotel of Virginia City was engaged for the occasion. Every obtainable luxury was ordered which Virginia City or San Francisco could furnish. Champagne was to be free as water in a spring flood. Everybody was invited. Toasts were drunk, and in response to "Our Host," Mr. Bowers was called upon to reply. He arose and delivered the following characteristic speech:

I've been in this yer country amongst the fust that come here. I've had powerful good luck, and I've got money to throw at the birds. Thar ain't no chance for a gentleman to spend his coin in this country, and thar ain't nothin' much to see, so me and Mrs. Bowers is agoin' to Yoorop to take in the sights. One of the great men of this country was in this region a while back. That was Horace Greeley. I saw him and he didn't look like no great shakes. Outside of him the only great men I've seen in this country is Governor Nye and Old Winnemucca. Now me and Mrs. Bowers is goin' to Yoorop to see the Queen of England and the other great men of them countries, and I hope you'll all jine in and drink Mrs. Bowers' health. Thar's plenty of Champagne, and money ain't no object.

Sandy and his wife spent several years abroad, purchased much elegant furniture, laces, and pictures for his mansion in Washoe, which was erected at a cost of over $400,000, and returned, and still "had money to throw at the birds"—the hawks and vultures and other birds of prey getting the greater portion. Without any good missionary to instruct, or any strong friend to advise and direct, he continued to throw his money at the birds with the approval and

encouragement of flatterers, sycophants, and robbers, and his princely fortune was wasted. His widow as late as 1881 earned a precarious livelihood near the scenes of her former toils and glory by telling fortunes.

L. S. Bowers died in 1868. Persia (the daughter) died in 1876. Mrs. Bowers died at the King's Daughters Home in Oakland in 1903. The mansion was purchased, in 1903, by Henry Riter, who is the present owner.

Sentiment into Cubes

LAST November New Yorkers studied the forty years' work of Picasso at the Museum of Modern Art. We delayed commenting on the event for fear that something cataclysmic might happen in the months following the exhibit. We had the secret hope that some outraged CRESSET reader would send us an indignant letter. Nothing happened, with the exception of the Finns' refusal to be collectivized. That, however, has nothing to do with Picasso.

The exhibition was, to put it in the most innocuous phrase, an impressive collection of possibly the greatest modern paintings from the brush and shears of the most discussed twentieth-century artist. Here the observer could contemplate Picasso's various periods: the Blue Period, the Rose Period, the Negroid, Harlequin, Cubist, and Impressionist Periods. On the walls of the museum were hung such classic paintings as *Two Acrobats with a Dog, Woman with a Fan,* and *The Harlequin's Family.* Nothing about those paintings to horrify the classic-minded. And then one might behold Picasso's ventures into cubism or his attempts at collage with scissors and paste. The result on the beholder of these latter experiments would be an indignant bewilderment. Finally there was the devastating tract for our times, *Guernica,* an enormous and bitter commentary on Spain's recent fratricidal war.

There are two fundamental approaches to a consideration of Picasso. The first approach would be from the traditionalist angle: calling Picasso a fool, ignoramus, charlatan. Such a negative approach would only reflect on the critic's deliberate hostility to an artist who is admittedly a master of all the classic techniques in painting. Picasso's early paintings are a testimony to his profound knowledge of everything that a great painter should know.

The other approach to this colossus of modern painting is from the philosophic angle: considering Picasso and his work as a tragic symbol of the decadence of western

civilization. As a rule every great artist, whether he is a painter, musician, or writer, must use the material at hand and redistil it through his personality. It is the thesis of Spengler's monumental work on the passing of the West that as a civilization declines its art becomes divorced from the soil, grows indifferent to the masses, and turns into a preoccupation of a coterie specially trained to appreciate such art. Certainly it is true that most of the paintings by Picasso require a sophisticated and highly developed appreciation in order to be grasped. Picasso's art is a horrible commentary on the disintegration of all values in our time. Even such a gigantism as *Guernica* reveals that what we fondly call western civilization will be made desolate by hatred, war, and the thousand and one concomitants. For all optimists we recommend a thorough bath in Picasso oil.

Add to Your Epitaph Scrap-book

God give me work
Till my life shall end
And life
Till my work shall end.

Over the grave of Winifred Holtby, Rudston, England

From a tombstone in Massachusetts:

Here lies my wife, Samantha Procter;
She took sick and would not doctor;
She could not stay, she had to go:
Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

This War

This war of nerves, watchful-waiting, and procrastination reminds us a lot of the *Alphonse and Gaston* comics of our boyhood days. "You first, my dear Adolf!" "After you, my dear Neville!"

The PILGRIM

By O. P. KRETZMANN

"All the trumpets sounded for him on the other side"
PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

Candle in the Dark*

MR. EDMAN is a philosopher and a wise man. . . . Although the terms are not always synonymous, he demonstrated in *Philosopher's Holiday* that he is remarkably sensitive to the calm currents of individual life which run under the maelstrom of mass movements in Europe and America. . . .

In this little footnote of 88 pages, entitled "A Postscript to Despair," Mr. Edman sets down his worldview. . . . He believes that there is something beyond these days of fear. . . . A candle burns in the dark, though fitfully. . . . I am very much interested in his Credo, since it is perhaps the best the twentieth century can offer. . . . An incongruous fusion of twentieth century philosophy and eighteenth century religion. . . .

In the first section of the volume Mr. Edman gives voice to his despair. . . . There seems to be nothing left. . . . "It (the war) has seemed to make a mockery of all our hopes, and nonsense of all our knowledge. It has turned the faith in education into an irony and has reduced to triviality the arts on which men have lavished their technical mastery and their lyric flame. It has made even private joys seem precarious and shamefaced. What do all these things avail, when they end in deliberate death and incalculable chaos? Men in the nineteenth century were sad that they could no longer believe in God. They are more deeply saddened now by the fact that they can no longer believe in man. For it is impossible to ignore so universal a disaster. Even the Ivory Tower is not bomb-proof, nor can we retreat into ourselves, for our deepest thoughts and sentiments are colored by a world catastrophe. Like it or not, we

* *Candle in the Dark:* A Postscript to Despair. By Irwin Edman. The Viking Press, New York. 1939. 88 pages. $1.25.

must think and we must feel about it. For once in our lives we are compelled to concern ourselves about issues larger than ourselves and about interests not immediately our own." . . . He has seemingly lost his faith in humanity: "The outbreak of war has merely brought to a focus our suspicion that a relatively pleasant life and a relatively decent behavior are not the standard equipment and the standard practice of human beings. . . ."

Particularly significant is his elegy on science: "Within certain limits, our reliance upon scientific method has been more than justified. Increasingly it has appeared that there is almost nothing that men cannot accomplish in their mastery over things. There is nothing that men cannot do, but there seems almost nothing too terrible for which they will not use or cannot be made to use their unprecedented powers. The science that was to make life beautiful has also made it hideous. It rains bombs upon defenseless cities as well as celestial music upon enraptured ears. It invents unspeakable tortures as well as the clean beauties of modern architecture. It brings the most elegant and disciplined of chamber music into our homes but it carries thereto also the voices of the demagogue and the dictator. It gives us abundance but has not prevented starvation in the midst of plenty. It gives us longer life—and swifter death."

This is Mr. Edman's problem. . . . Ours too. . . . His eyes are clear. . . . His solution is another matter. . . . He suggests, first, that we become more historical-minded in order to realize that what is has been and will be. . . . He also believes that since human nature "is largely what its opportunities and circumstances make it," it can be improved. . . . Apparently he has recovered some of his faith in humanity. . . . He concludes with a vague reference to the "eternal" and believes that finally "we shall be enabled to behold what men have always beheld when they have raised their eyes to see: the serene, unending recurrences in Nature, the eternal forms and types of happiness and suffering, of cruelty and wisdom, of barbarism and saintliness, that perpetually return on the human scene. . . ."

I wonder. . . . Is that enough? . . . Can a man live and die on that? . . . To give the past an eternal meaning, the present a lively hope, and the future a possible glory, I must have more than this. . . . Men must change if the world is to change. . . . No one, not even Mr. Edman, has told us how to do that. . . . Except a Book and a Church living victoriously in a defeated world by that Book.

Bach, Mencken, and Beer

IN THE roaring twenties the most important figure in American literature was H. L. Mencken, the sage and bad boy of Baltimore. . . . Recently he has again hit the headlines with his *Happy Days,* an unexpectedly quiet and peaceful re-creation of the Baltimore of the late nineteenth century. . . . By the way, there are few more charming towns on the North American continent than Baltimore. . . . A gracious tradition more persistent than the fog from the Chesapeake. . . . The white steps which the good matrons of Baltimore (or their maids) scrub with fanatic devotion. . . . The Peabody Conservatory of Music, one of the greatest in the country. . . . The solid colonial buildings of Johns Hopkins University standing in Maryland moonlight. . . . Even the gentle slurp of Baltimore mud as one wanders across the campus after an evening in the stacks. . . . The lovely white houses out on Charles Avenue and Belair Road. . . . The solid tradition of learning still persistent in the town of Gilman, Osler, Welch, and Kelly. . . .

All this, just by the way. . . . We were talking about H. L. Mencken, Baltimore's most famous citizen and still the town's bad boy. . . . We have often noted that the town regards him with a somewhat tolerant and affectionate amusement, mingled with a touch of pride. . . . Perhaps no one in Baltimore agrees with him, but no one doubts his honesty. . . .

Now to our subject. . . . With the coming of spring, music lovers along the eastern seaboard make the annual pilgrimage to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, to hear the famous Bethlehem Bach Choir. . . . Not as good as it once was under the baton of the great Wolle, but good enough. . . . Back in 1928 Mr. Mencken journeyed to Bethlehem and wrote in the *Baltimore Evening Sun* a most unusual essay in musical criticism. . . . 1928, you will remember, was still in the era of prohibition. . . . Mr. Mencken wrote: "The Pennsylvania 'Dutch' never learn anything and never forget anything. They began singing Bach back in the Eighteenth Century, and they are still hard at it, regardless of the rise of Beethoven, Wagner and jazz. They fight their heroic way through the B minor mass in black neckties handed down from their grandfathers. They live in brick houses that were built before the first steel-mill lifted its horrible head in South Bethlehem, and they still manage to keep those houses as spick and span as grass widows, despite all the smoke and soot. The victuals that come in cans are unknown to them. They yet refresh themselves

after rehearsals with *Pfannehase, Schnitz und Knepp, Pfefferkraut,* and *Spitzel.* And they yet drink—

"But here I must not succumb to rhetoric. The plain and tragic fact is that the beer in Bethlehem is now bad—nay, hopeless. Four years ago, when I last visited the town, it was excellent, and I went back this time full of the sentiments that must have uplifted a crusader on approaching Jerusalem. The first bottle gave me a dreadful crack: it was the same depressing bilge that the booticians foist upon the poor saloonkeepers of Baltimore. It seemed unreasonable that Pennsylvania Dutchmen should drink such stuff, so I checked my baggage and proceeded to search the town. The best I could find was a low grade of steam beer, fit only for Polish weddings and oyster roasts.

"Four years ago Bethlehem was still magnificently beery, and the crowds that came to hear the choir moved in a steady and orderly manner from saloon to saloon, getting into the right mood for Bach. For you may be sure that old Johann Sebastian did not write his incomparable music on well water. He was a pious man, and most of his compositions belong to the church, but no one believed in his day that piety and decent habits were incompatible. He led, despite his narrow means, the life of a Christian and a gentleman. Retiring from the Thomaskirche on Sunday (I have sat there in his gallery and sweated veneration!), he stopped at some convenient *Bierstube,* and there got down a couple of *Humpen* of the pale, glassy *Helles* for which Leipzig is still celebrated, as it is for its learning. . . .

"The members of the Bach Choir know the B Minor Mass so well that their mere singing of the notes is completely perfect. They never make a ragged entrance and they never waver in tempo. Director John Frederick Wolle is so adept at his drillmaster's job that by the time he steps into his pulpit he is scarcely needed any longer. Unless my eyes and ears gravely deceived me a week ago, I once detected him waving his arms—he uses no baton —off the beat. But the choir kept on singing in perfect time. It would keep on singing in perfect time if the steel-mills across the river blew up, and the steeple of the festival church began to wobble. Its *pianissimos* are worth going miles to hear, and when it cuts loose in a forte the very firmament trembles.". . .

The problem raised by Mr. Mencken is an important one. . . . No doubt our music critic will devote a column to it in the near future. . . . Since Mr. Mencken obviously exaggerates, an antidote will be necessary . . . !

Talk and Solitude

A MARCH rain, stormy interlude between winter and spring, beat against the windows. . . . It was only a small company, and no one was sitting up straight. . . . That was important. . . . Nothing significant was ever said by anyone who was sitting primly in a chair with both feet on the ground. . . . Only a bill collector or landlord sits that way. . . .

For a few moments time and wind had brought us together from the ruts of living. . . . There was talk of many things, of life and the inconstant years, of war and peace, of little problems and final matters. . . .

Inevitably the conversation drifted to the comparative values of talk and solitude. . . . The wisest among us said that there must always be a balance between them. . . . One of the strange marks of modern living is our fear of being alone. . . . We have forgotten that the last deep realities of life are not found in a crowd. . . . We have lost the habit of solitude. . . .

It is true, of course, that there is much good in good talk. . . . The world would be less wise if Socrates had not loitered in the market place at Athens. . . . The world would be less happy if there had been no Mermaid Tavern for great conversation when the Good Queen reigned and England was England. . . . The world would be poorer if Samuel Johnson had not talked, or Coleridge, or Lamb. . . . Beyond all these there is always the picture of the little company that wandered around Galilee and Judea many years ago and listened to the greatest talk ever heard on earth. . . Speech from the company of heaven in the solitude of earth. . . .

Note on Style

A FEW moments ago I said something about H. L. Mencken. . . . One of the reasons for his power and influence was his remarkable style. . . . He was often imitated, but never successfully. . . . Essentially a good style must be the perfect expression of the man. . . . Even the slightest artificiality destroys its power. . . . The more distinctive a style is, the more delicate is the line which separates it from the artificial and unreal. . . . I thought of that some time ago when I saw the following paragraph from *The Glamor of Dublin,* by D. L. Kelleher, which describes the death of Stella, whose unhappy star crossed the path of Dean Swift: "Such a night with clouds falling from the stars like hair unbound, and a lamenting wind moping and wandering over the city till even he shudders in that lamplit room, poring strangely over his papers,

noting down and stopping with a start to drop his pen and strike with his palms upon the table and recover from an agony and so write again. Here in his dean's house, now fallen to be police station, is Swift, the satirist. Swift, the vitriol-tongue, who can burn a parliament away with a phrase, Swift, whose fame all envy but whose self there is none more to love. For over there by those torches and tapers they are laying her deep tonight in the Cathedral corner, out of his reach entirely now who has tortured her with riddles too long. No music at the end nor sunlight streaming through a painted window, no plumes but the smoke-wreaths of the pine, no tender organ notes to dim the dry coughing of the older clergy, and the 'clatch, clatch' of shovels struck into the clay. So lay her down and leave her to the pitying dark, poor Stella who has been beguiled and baffled and wrecked by this intellect and enigma of the awful Swift. And for him as he drops his head upon his crossed palms while the lamp gutters out on the deanery room a little pity too! For, colossus of his day, yet does malign Fate strike him down with a fearful physical ill. And from his gloom and his secret hide, ye kind stars! and pass quickly, telling it not to his neighbors, thou lamenting wind!"

One more note on style. . . . Our prize for graphic speech this month goes to the announcer who, a few nights ago, introduced the "Danse Macabre" as a "jam session in a graveyard." . . .

A Defective Heart

"It is not pessimism when we say that there is absolutely no hope for the world in conferences and discussions, in international and national experimentations, in legislation and moralization. The thing that is wrong with the world today is not a defective national or economic machinery, but a defective heart, a heart that has permitted itself to be alienated from God."—PAUL LINDEMANN.

The pulpit peers at the men and women in the pews—

A PASTOR LOOKS AT LIFE

By ONE OF THEM

READING an essay by Samuel Butler, the other day, I came across a charming little anecdote about a small daughter of an Anglican rector who was in some mental difficulty about the anthem. "She read in her Prayer Book," wrote Butler, "that in choirs and places where they sing here followeth the anthem; yet the person with this most mysteriously sounding name never did follow. They had a choir, and no one could say the church was not a place where they sang, for they did sing—both chants and hymns. Why, then, this persistent slackness on the part of the anthem, who at this juncture should follow her papa, the rector, into the reading-desk? No doubt he would come some day, and then what would he be like? Fair or dark? Tall or short? Would he be bald and wear spectacles like papa, would he be young and goodlooking? Anyhow, there was something wrong, for it was announced that he would follow, and he never did follow; therefore there was no knowing what he might not do next."

The story made me smile responsively, for I well remember the time when, as a small boy in my father's church, I similarly misinterpreted a phrase from the hymnal. Those were the days when an English Lutheran Church leaned heavily on its sectarian neighbors for hymnody and liturgical (?) material; we had not yet learned to appreciate the chorales nor the better hymns and tunes of the Church of England and its offshoots. I say this to explain—and to apologize for—the frequent singing, in the church of my boyhood, of that musically and poetically abominable ditty, "My Church, my Church, my dear old Church, my father's and my own." The rhythm of the music was like that of a football yell,

which, of course, appealed to my primitive instincts. But there was another characteristic of the song which aroused a somewhat higher emotion in me, and that was the repeated mention of "my father." I almost burst with pride when we came to this line. The whole church, lock, stock, and barrel, pulpit, lectern, and altar, was "papa's"—and mine too, for so it was stated in the hymnbook. My father was pretty important, and so, I thought, was I, by virtue of being his son.

Boys and Girls

Before me, several afternoons a week, in confirmation class, sits a group of boys and girls to whom the language of the Church is just as mysterious, and to many of them much more so, as the rubric of the Prayer Book was to the litle girl in Butler's essay. Some of them will outgrow this bafflement, and God knows I do what I can to hasten the process. With some it will be a natural, easy development, facilitated by the same environmental forces that operated upon the rector's daughter and the minister's son. The little girl, when Butler wrote his essay, had learned what an anthem was, and, it is to be hoped, had learned also that, except in very rare instances, an anthem should never follow anything. I, too, have come to understand that it is much better to sing hymns about God than about man—a thing which, unfortunately, has not been discovered by certain composers of spiritual songs. But some of these youngsters whom it is my business to lead to a knowledge of my Father and theirs have not the advantage of living in a rectory or parsonage, or, indeed, of living in a home that, by the most liberal definition of the word, can be called Christian. Though they do not know it, a battle is being fought over them, a battle which sometimes narrows down to more or less difficult conversations between parents and pastor. These boys and girls, often through very apparent guidance of the Holy Spirit, come to our Sunday School, and to my confirmation class at the age of eleven, twelve, thirteen, or even fourteen. The older they come, the faster and harder I must work. I know that the moment they leave the church they go into a world that is set against everything I have just said. Some of them even go into such a home. The fight for the child is exciting, if nothing else. Sometimes the Church wins, sometimes not. I do not know what the percentage of victories is. All but a very few of the children enrolled in the class are eventually confirmed. Just what that means is hard to say. With some the plant has no root;

others will bring forth an hundredfold. Which illustrates, as one of my professors used to say, the doctrine of election.

A fraction of these children—though a rather small one, I flatter myself with believing—will, in the years to come, think me a fool. Perhaps I am. I have certainly done my share of foolish things in life. But I console myself with the thought that certain people in Corinth thought St. Paul a fool, too. That is to say, I am not now objecting to being considered a fool, but to the reason which usually is responsible for that opinion. The reason is not often expressed, but it is pretty broadly hinted at. You can see it, for example, in the average picturization of the non-Catholic clergyman, with which Hollywood delights the unbelievers of the land. Weak and flabby. Eyes continually rolling toward heaven in affected piety. A well-meaning but rather helpless sentimentalist, given to uttering platitudes because he is afraid of uttering anything else. A person who is utterly out of contact with life, knowing nothing of the real problems of the surging humanity all about him. Certainly such an individual is a parasite on the body of civilization. He gets in the way.

I should respectfully like to protest, as strenuously as the dignity of these columns will permit, against such a representation. There no doubt are clergymen of this type, but, for one thing, they are almost invariably found in a denomination that has lost its faith. Given a religion that has ceased to be Christian, and you are likely to turn up a whole truckful of ministers that, in the exact sense of the term, are fools. "Der Apfel," runs the German proverb, "fällt nicht weit vom Stamm." Which, as Chaucer would interpret it, means, "They are left holding the bag." They really are. God has escaped them, because their church has fled from Him. Now ambassadors of God ought to be ambassadors of God. If they are not, they become—well—fools.

Another Type

There is another kind of clergyman, however, and I like to think that this species is still the more numerous. He suffers under the Hollywoodian conception of him as a nincompoop. If that is the way life looks at him, he looks at life very differently. He does not think of himself as a doddering old sentimentalist who goes about kissing babies, patting little boys on the head, and forcing a heavily sugared water of life down protesting throats. He has a far higher tradition than that. He is a member of a glorious company. Mel-

chizedek was his predecessor, and Elijah, and Isaiah, and the Baptist, and Peter and Paul. To him it has been given to speak the Word of God, and his heart must be that of a merciful priest, who has "compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." He must see, as grace is given him to do so, with the eyes of God. A tremendous responsibility is his. He watches over souls as one "that must give account." He knows something of what St. Paul meant when he spoke of "the care of all the churches."

Anyone who thinks about it at all must see the absurdity of the charge that a pastor is a fool because he knows nothing about life. This opinion is held, as I have said, by that minority to whom the language of the Prayer Book, the Hymnal, and the pastor's sermons ever remain incomprehensible. The terminology of the Church to them is utterly unrelated to life. Even if they do understand it, they refuse to make the application, from the adolescent boy who fails to appreciate that "Thou shalt not steal" means not to rifle parked automobiles, to the full-grown man who neglects to apply the same commandment to his business relations. Both think the pastor something of a fool for believing that Christianity can be lived in a world such as ours. These people are the despair and worry of the shepherd of the flock. There is as little confidence on the one side as there is on the other. And not much can be done about it.

Saints

Happily, however, these erring and hardened sheep are in the minority. The amazing thing is that their number is not larger —that is, in the Church. Outside the Church, the number of those who do not understand, who ridicule, who are the fools of Satan, has become so great that the man of God grows sick at the sight of it. His concern is great, because he knows the power and the end of evil, and because he knows too that evil need have no power and no victory in the lives of men. Week after week he sees both things alive and at work in his people: the pull of sin and the strength of God. Some of his people have turned out to be Judases; others are Peters. He could, if he were at liberty to do so, give you names and case histories of people in both classes. It is those who are still with the flock —the Peters—who give him the courage and the faith he needs to go on. The victories they have won are most heartening. And these victories are many—a repeated testimony to the power of the Holy Ghost.

For example, sitting usually in

the crossing on Sunday morning, is a young woman who for five years was the mistress of her employer. She is that no longer. If I do not see her on Sunday, I know that she is either sick or out of town; and she rarely misses a communion. On the other side of the center aisle sits a younger girl, who does not know who her father is. Her mother would no more think of coming along with her than she would of spending an evening without a drink of whiskey; but the girl is one of God's saints. Over in the transept sits a middle-aged couple who for years were typical examples of the modern pagan; they belonged to the group which thinks the pastor a fool. Admonitions, letters, warnings of excommunication all did no good. Then their only son died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-one. Since the day of his death the parents have not missed a Sunday in the house of God. Farther to the rear, in the nave, is a young man who several years ago almost succeeded in committing suicide. He told me the reason for it one night; the reason is not important now. What is important is that he is to be found in the church building at least two evenings a week, about his Father's business. Just a few rows behind him, on Sunday morning, is a woman who has had the troubles of a Job. Her husband is on his deathbed, afflicted with a horrible disease, her son is in the state reformatory, and her daughter has twice been in the police court on a charge of shoplifting. But all of this has not been enough to tear this woman away from her Lord; it has only brought her closer to Him. When I visit her, she teaches me far more than I teach her. All over the church are people who know poverty; I have been in most of their homes and know that life is not easy for them. Yet they come to church regularly to rejoice in the riches of Christ. Everyone before me, I think, has some sore, some hurt which he keeps covered up. I have seen a good many of these exposed. Here a baby lost in childbirth, there an unrequited love, sickness and bereavement of every description—these things and many more pass in review before the eyes of the Church. If I do not see people at any other time, I at least see them at their baptism, confirmation, marriage, and death—the most important moments in life. Most of the parish I see at other times too: rejoicing at home, suffering in hospitals, weeping in cemeteries. That is the stuff of which life is made —not the national movements one reads of in the newspapers. I often come close to the heart of it, and, as often as not, when there is suffering, there is a victory, too. The

wars in Europe, Asia, and Africa incline us to pessimism; but not the lives of God's saints. Every man of them has a hard time, but not a few have grown enormously since the days when they were mystified by the rubrics of the service and the language of the hymns. They know now what the Church is talking about, and they are willing to die for it. Life in the mass may be pretty disgusting, but in more individuals than most of us suspect, it's glorious.

Said over the NBC Network

"There has never been in the entire history of the world more than one good war, and that was the Trojan War, which took place a long time ago. They fought for a woman, and every soldier on both sides knew exactly what he was fighting for. It never has been done since."

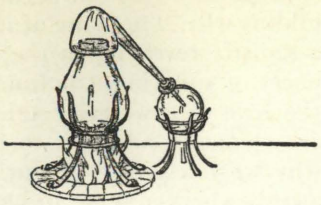
WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

Aristocracy

"The cheer-leaders in literature have a confused notion that, if three or four million people buy the books of a certain author, we are obliged to concede him or her a prominent position in literature. At the risk of being regarded as conceited and high-brow, I assert that we have no right to do anything of the kind. Literature is not a democracy where numbers rule. It is an aristocracy where brains and originality are paramount." WILLIAM MCFEE.

Rules for Reading

"The three practical rules, then, which I have to offer, are—1. Never read any book that is not a year old. 2. Never read any but famed books. 3. Never read any but what you like."—RALPH WALDO EMERSON.



THE ALEMBIC

By THEODORE GRAEBNER

"The world cares little for anything a man has to utter that has not previously been distilled in the alembic of his life."

HOLLAND, *Gold-Foil*

The Horror Strip. It is awaited every day by millions. Each of the characters has his following,—whether it be Flash Gordon, or Superman, or Mandrake the Magician, or Buck Rogers, or Brick Bradford in his conflict with the monster Avil Blue. Possibly you have paid no attention to these strips in the morning and evening dailies. You have lost nothing, but I suggest that you spend a few minutes this evening with the "comics" you have passed up, and see what kind of emotional and moral pabulum is offered our American youth in these episodes of the horror strip.

It all began with the drawings of the Flash Gordon series. Technically these drawings are the ultimate in illustration. They are masterpieces of draftsmanship, and possess a realism sufficient to overcome all the absurdities of situations and plot in which the artist permits his imagination to revel. Well, he has found imitators and the end is not yet.

The Pop-Eye cartoon introduced the goons—fearful creatures controlled by an evil-minded hag —again with a realism that was astounding. And then the horror strip full blown, as represented in the characters mentioned above.

I can see no good but only evil in these products of a thoroughly commercialized art of the terrible.

There is a place for horror in the field of art, also in literature. But the characters and exploits of Mandrake, Superman, Buck Rogers and the rest are so distorted in their morality, so abnormal in situation, yet withal so strong in their appeal to a mind open to the fanciful and the unusual, that they cannot prove otherwise than harmful to the minds which begin to respond to their appeal,— to adult minds, yes, but particularly to the minds of children,

and certainly to the mind of the moron. I believe these cartoons to be breeders of crime. They are certainly destructive of the sense of reality, and are poison to the imagination.

The characters depicted are all endowed with preternatural intelligence and power, saintly or diabolical. Superman jumps 500 feet and saves an automobile that has already shot over the brink of a precipice. Avil Blue sends a steel robot 600 feet tall to demand tribute from a city, and to back up his demand causes his steel gauntlets to pluck the five top stories from a skyscraper and drop them into the ocean. Hypnotism, magic, weird electrical devices, space-ships, invaders from other planets, hideous monsters as big as an ocean liner, gigantic octopuses endowed with electric tentacles, huge bears and lions, fantastic birds that run over glaciers, death-ray pistols, radiations that freeze and burn—a phantasmagoria of horrors—and our children feed on this ghastly mess, to the destruction of literary taste and artistic imagination, and with grave peril to their normal reasoning faculties (if there be a hidden weakness) and their moral sense.

 —**Masters of the Weird.** I can depend on it that the reader will follow me through, for there is in human nature a chord that responds to the call of the weird. The psychologists have long ago told us why. The sense of mystery, a sadistic revelling in the experiences of suffering, combined with the love of a well-told tale—these are elements sufficient to explain why we like stories featuring the awful, whether it be in character or in incident. I shall try to show that, above all, the *reactions of the soul* under the stress of the dreadful has a fascination for us.

There was an age of the weird in English and American literature. A fine review contributed to THE CRESSET of 1939 dealt with this subject. There are still in demand today the productions of two writers independent of the "Gothic" school—the mystery novels of Edwin George Bulwer-Lytton and the masterpiece of Mrs. Mary Wollstoncraft Shelley, *Frankenstein.* Insofar as all these novels deal with patent impossibilities—as in the case of Frankenstein, the construction of a living human body out of the odds and ends of the dissecting table and the charnel house, but a being lacking a conscience—(a theme illustrated a hundred times since in the cartoon-strips)—insofar as such violations of natural law enter in, some of these stories can have no appeal to the intelligence. It is otherwise with the work of Edgar Allan Poe, whose horror

stories involve no inherent impossibilities, and hence are rated among the best ever written.

Then there is the *Wandering Jew,* by Eugene Sue, which has a certain gloomy majesty and a haunting sense of reality in its most dreadful scenes, probably not equalled by the work of any other novelist except one, E. T. A. Hoffmann (died 1822)—in *The Elixirs of Satan.* An elixir is an alcoholic mixture holding in solution some substance, something in the nature of a cordial. Brother Medardus, a monk of the Capuchin Order, drinks a draught from a mysterious bottle, a remnant of Satan's Elixir, which had been discovered among the relics of St. Anthony. The drink causes Brother Medardus to acquire tremendous powers of intellect, of ingenuity and cunning, combined with insatiable desires. He commits sacrilege, adultery, and murder, and now his evil conscience begins to haunt him. He hears voices in the silence of the night.

"Strange faces glared at me from wall and ceiling in the flickering light of the lamp. I heard low moanings and the rattling of chains. I heard again the death rattle of Victorin and Euphemia—'Was I to blame for your death?! Was it not just vengeance?!' And so for nine successive nights, until I found myself faint with horror, stretched out on the cold floor of my cell. Now I heard below me a regular, gentle knocking. I listened—more knocks, and occasionally a weird laugh coming from below the pavement. I sprang to my feet, but the knocking continued. Then softly, softly in a halting hoarse voice it said: 'Me-dar-dus! Me-dar-dus!' Who's there? I cried. The laughing and groaning and knocking became more distinct. I cried out demanding that the Voice reveal itself. Now the knocking under my feet became much stronger: 'Heeheehee, heeheehee, Broth-er . . . Broth-er . . . Me-dar-dus . . . I'm here . . . here . . . o-o-pen up . . . let me out!' To my intense horror it seemed that *it was my own voice* I was beginning to hear. . . ."

I forbear to translate the passage which follows a little later when the Person Underneath—who is the criminal monk himself—begins to lift the stone flags of the cell floor, two hands appearing, followed by the arms—a dark shaven head. The illusion is perfect once you admit the possibility of diabolical influences transmitted by a draught from the Satanic Elixir.

It is not the kind of story to be read by anyone in the dead of night, when the wind blows back and forth an unlatched shutter, or by anyone sensitive to uncanny sounds and shadows.

 —**Dark Corners of the Soul.** Those shutters may have reminded you of one of the most spine-chilling scenes in modern

drama—the violent blowing to and fro of the shutter on a window of the upper floor of *Wuthering Heights,* while downstairs the old nurse sits and tells the story of the unhappy lovers. But even the dim form of the visitor running through the dark and dust-laden attic, to silence the horrible sound of the shutter—and the glimpse of the man and maid long dead but now seen wending their way up the mountain-side—all this is nothing as compared with the dark, gloomy passions of the waif who had grown up, and the unconquerable infatuation of the unhappy woman. The story never gives any clear utterance regarding the weird influences at play, but the very atmosphere, and this goes for the photoplay as well as the novel, is surcharged with the supernatural. The worst, the most dreadful truth, remains untold, and through this realism of the untold *Wuthering Heights* becomes ten times more terrifying than *Frankenstein* or any of the Boris Karlov plays or *The Cat and the Canary,* with its dead men tumbling out of closets.

What remains now? Children will feel the horror of goons dragging the sailor from the bowsprit and of death rays stopping in interplanetary spaces the invaders from Neptune; Bulwer-Lytton still makes us shudder in the corridors of his mysterious manor-houses; and none readily can withstand the fascination which draws him forward to the death scene in *Wuthering Heights.* But when all is said and done, there are no horrors so fascinating as those in the modern psychological novel. This brings us to the Russians, let me say to Dostoevsky, let me say to *Crime and Punishment.* It is a very commonplace story. A man finds himself on his uppers and resolves to commit robbery. He assumes that there will be resistance, and so he prepares a weapon. He sews a loop onto his coat lining, and in it he hangs a hatchet. He visits a woman who was lending out money on interest; he slays her; and he also slays the person who comes upon the scene of the first crime. Later, the working of his conscience leads to his undoing, and he confesses the robbery and double murder. This is an ordinary story, you will agree with me. But if you have read it you will admit that it is one of the most ghastly descriptions of the preparation, the commission, and the consequences of crime that has ever been written. I have never been able to read beyond the description of the first murder. Dostoevsky's realism causes you to think and feel and plot within the brain of the murderer Raskolnik. *You* are seeking a way out of financial stress, *you* are plotting

robbery, *you* are sewing the loop inside your coat, *you* go out with the tool of sharpened edge under your arm, *you* are being frightened away from the path that leads to crime by some accidental trifling event and *you* are pushed forward by another as trifling, *you* have the thought of murder in your brain while you chat with passing acquaintances, and so on, until the hatchet is jerked out. If this doesn't sound nerve-racking, try it yourself. I have no acquaintance who was able to read beyond the second murder.

—Truth Worse than Fiction. I don't know whether Grimmelshausen is regarded as a reliable source of history. I do know that his work, *Simplicius Simplicissimus* (written about 1670), contains an enormous amount of information regarding social conditions of that age, especially conditions in Germany during the Thirty Years' War. I don't know whether the adventures Grimmelshausen relates are regarded as a true chronicle or as elaborations on the theme of religious war. What I do know is that literary critics have called it the most terrible book written in the German language. It has never affected me as did the psychological surgery of which you are made the victim by the Russians, especially in *Crime and Punishment;* but I will say that the passage which tells about the "execution" of a captive soldier after he had been promised freedom if he would forswear his religion—thus making sure that his soul would go to hell—has a disturbing effect unless one drops the book right there and with an imprecation on the imagination of old Grimmelshausen turns to the daily paper and surveys the social and political scene of March, 1940. This includes examination of some wire-photo illustrations showing a hundred Russians in frozen heaps amidst their demolished trucks and tanks.

We now take you to America. We leave the field of literature and dip into history pure and simple. Listen to the story of what happens when man in his reckless folly disregards a few simple laws of nature.

—The Peshtigo Horror of 1871. A writer in *American Forests* truthfully says that the reason for our annual loss of thirty-five million acres of forests due to fire is chiefly a problem of public indifference, and people are indifferent to the pleas for forest protection because they have no imagination. No one who has not seen a forest ablaze can have an impression of the circus of horrors which the scene presents. And so they will leave glowing embers on

camping sites or throw a match aside after lighting a pipe or cigarette. It was not a coal-oil lamp exploding but a match thrown into dry leaves that in 1871 caused a conflagration which, in some ways, stands at the top of such horrors in the history of the human race. At least, I have never read anything so filled with appalling dreadfulness as the story of the burning of Peshtigo in 1871.

It occurred in the same month and year, yes, it struck the doomed city on that same October 8, when flames licked at a stable in Chicago's DeKoven Street. Only 200 died in the Chicago fire. Peshtigo's holocaust, in which 700 lost their lives, is probably not known to one out of a million outside of Wisconsin state.

There had been fires in the Wisconsin timbers for several weeks, started by the carelessness of crews who were building the North Western railroad. The village of Peshtigo lay baked during a night on which the sun rose dimly. By noon the sun disappeared entirely, and a strange yellow half-light, ghastly in its effect on the appearance of men and things, lighted the streets. Towards evening black and white ashes began to drift through the screenless windows. A sullen red glowed over the distant woods, the smoke got thicker, and people began to hear a low moaning, deep and far off, that soon changed to a steady roar. Before long fire rained down upon the city, the forest became a sheet of flame, and what next happened is best told in the words of an eyewitness as recorded by Mr. Stewart H. Holbrook in *American Forests:*

It was a seething, searing hell, and the hurricane it was riding traveled as fast as light itself. It swept in so suddenly that no man could say for certain what happened in the next few moments. What is assuredly and horribly known is that two score folks, their senses blown away in that first blast of flame, rushed into the big boarding house, and there they were burned to white ash or black cinder, every last one of them.

Others fled to the river, where many drowned but a few lived it out. And those who lived it out told afterward of things that couldn't be forgotten. They saw horses and cattle, yes, and men and women, stagger a moment over the smoking sawdust streets, then go down and burn brightly like so many flares of pitch-pine. Forty years afterward, an ancient man's voice choked as he told of crouching in the almost boiling water of the Peshtigo River and of watching pretty Helga Rockstad as she ran down a blazing sidewalk, her blond hair streaming, and of seeing the long blond hair leap into flame that stopped Helga in her tracks. He had looked at the spot next morning, and he found two nickel garter buckles and a little mound of white-gray ash.

That's what the heat of two billion burning pine trees could do. The heat struck worst at Peshtigo, but it also struck elsewhere in Wisconsin that night. Religious settlers at Brussels saw the same strange yellow light that Peshtigo knew, and they shouted that Judgment Day had come at last. So it had for many of them. Sixty-eight men fled from Williamson's sawmill, but three others crawled into a large tank of water, kept as a protection against fire, and there they perished.

Seventy-five were burned to death at Little Sturgeon, close to seven hundred in Peshtigo, and weeks later the death list mounted to fifteen hundred.

If your public library has the 1871 *Harper's Weekly,* look up the full-page woodcut in the issue of December 2. It will help out the imagination of those who cannot realize the possibilities of evil in the smoldering embers of the camp or who throw a match over the shoulder as they walk the forest trails.

And now, dear readers, especially those of you who are finishing this tale as the bells in the church steeples are about to toll the solemn midnight hour, I would suggest that, in order to regain the normal serenity of your minds, you turn to the musical department, a few pages onward, and take note of this month's release of records which, by their very titles, fill the mind with harmonies soothing and remedial.

A Sonnet on the Favorite American Sandwich

The sonnet is a small hamburger steak,
Cooked to a turn and seasoned for a queen,
Garnished with tender lettuce leaves to make
Its cheek a deeper brown amid the green;
It should be laid as softly as a child
Between twin blankets of the whitest bread
With a young onion, crisp and undefiled,
And just the lightest touch of mustard-spread.

T. E. B.

MUSIC and Music Makers

By WALTER A. HANSEN

Hugo Wolf Must Be Numbered among the Great Masters of the Art Song.

It is sometimes unfortunate for a great master to be the contemporary of a great master. Franz Schubert (1797-1828), for example, lived the most of his brief life while the mighty Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was in the limelight. His achievements were as valuable to the world at that time as they are today; but the majority of those among whom he moved and worked had come under the potent spell of the other's genius to such an overwhelming extent that the short, round-shouldered, tallow-faced, pot-bellied, bespectacled, and stubby-fingered composer of marvelously beautiful lieder was shamefully neglected. In like manner, Hugo Wolf (1860-1903), another worker of miracles in the domain of the art song, was forced to eke out his existence in comparative obscurity, largely because of the excitement and the enthusiasm aroused by the music of Richard Wagner (1813-1883) and Johannes Brahms (1833-1897). Wolf's lot in life was even more tragic than that of Schubert; for during a great part of his lifetime the champions of Brahms, led by the learned and determined Eduard Hanslick, were waging a war to the knife with the Wagnerites. How could Wolf hope to be heard to the best purpose above the tumult and the shouting that went on about him? He himself entered the fracas with a will; for Brahms was an abomination in his sight, but Wagner was one of his idols.

Wolf was born in the little town of Windischgräz, in Southern Styria. His father, Philipp Wolf, a tanner by trade, had learned to play the violin, the piano, and the guitar with considerable skill and, as a result, devoted many of his leisure hours to music. He founded a choral society and a string quartet. Naturally, playing and singing had a prominent place in the family-life of the Wolfs. In early boyhood, Hugo became acquainted with many of

the mysteries of the piano and the violin under the strict tutelage of his father. Rumor had it that more than one bow came to an untimely end while it was being applied to the boy's back by the somewhat impatient teacher.

In spite of many scoldings and whippings, the lad made rapid progress in music. But his work in school was far from satisfactory. Time and again he escaped the dread disgrace of failure in one institution by the simple but highly unprofitable expedient of enrolling in another. Studies bored him beyond measure. He importuned his father to permit him to enter the Vienna Conservatory. Finally, after much pleading, he received permission to do so. He was fifteen years old at the time, and his joy knew no bounds. Unfortunately, however, he was soon expelled from the conservatory. Josef Hellmesberger, the director, had received a threatening letter, and, for some reason or other, Hugo was suspected of being the author. Protestations of innocence fell on deaf ears. The lad was sent packing.

Largely Self-taught

Wolf became one of the world's great masters of the lied, and it is no exaggeration to say that he reached this lofty pinnacle without benefit of formal instruction. The fact that the doors of the Vienna Conservatory had been closed to him did not quench his desire to learn. He felt the pangs of poverty as few men of genius have ever felt them; yet he studied the works of Bach and Beethoven day in and day out. Shortly after he had been driven from the school, he met Wagner, who happened to be sojourning in Vienna. With fear and trembling Wolf showed the master some of his manuscripts. Who knows what he would have done if Wagner had rebuffed him? Fortunately, the widely praised and profusely excoriated composer spoke words of encouragement to Hugo, who, in turn, became an ardently enthusiastic champion of the ideals of his brilliant contemporary.

But Wolf was no copyist. The influence of Wagner can be seen here and there in his vigorously effective manner of harmonization; but in other respects his writings bear the stamp of staunch originality. His independence of spirit no doubt accounted in large measure for the fact that his friends and acquaintances were never numerous. Since men of genius as well as other mortals must have food and clothing, Wolf served for a time as music critic for the *Vienna Salonblatt*. He did not hesitate to express his convictions with cutting candor. Brahms, in particular, was a

thorn in his flesh. It was no more than natural, therefore, to find Max Kalbeck, a devoted partisan of Brahms, writing as follows concerning some of Wolf's songs: "Herr Hugo Wolf . . . at one time a reviewer, in which capacity he caused unintentional amusement in musical circles by some astonishing examples of his style and taste. The advice was given him to try his hand at composition instead. The latest productions of his Muse have shown that this well-meant advice was bad. He should turn critic again." Hans Richter, the eminent conductor, vented his spleen with far-reaching fury, the renowned Rosé Quartet refused pointblank to play his quartet, and an opera from the young man's pen was summarily brushed aside in Vienna to give place to Anton Rubinstein's stillborn *The Demon.*

True, Wolf had a small circle of friends—friends who had abiding faith in his ability and reached gladly and generously into their purses to help him; but during his lifetime they were unable to obtain for him the recognition he so richly deserved. It mattered little that shortly before his death fame seemed to be well on its way. The city of Stuttgart had heard his opera, his works for chorus had been given in Berlin, his songs were being sung throughout Germany, a *Hugo Wolf Verein* had been founded, and the Emperor of Austria had decreed that 1,200 crowns be paid to him annually. By this time, Wolf was becoming hopelessly insane.

A Tragic End

The terrible malady came upon the composer in September, 1897. Delusions upon delusions preyed on his rapidly disintegrating mind. He was placed in a private asylum; but, after four months, he was discharged as apparently cured. Yet, in spite of extensive tours through Italy and Austria, the affliction returned in October of the following year. He was again committed to an asylum, where he remained until, in February, 1903, a merciful death relieved him. There was an impressive funeral service, and Wolf's friends saw to it that a monument to him was raised near those erected in honor of Schubert and Beethoven. With bitter irony Romain Rolland tells us of the burial: "There were all those who had done nothing for Hugo Wolf while he lived—the Austrian State, the city of Vienna, his native town of Windischgräz, the conservatory which had expelled him, the Society of the Friends of Music which had so

Alinari Photo

THE CRUCIFIXION by Mantegna

"And when they were come to the place called Calvary there they crucified Him and two malefactors, one on the right hand and one on the left."

Anderson Photo

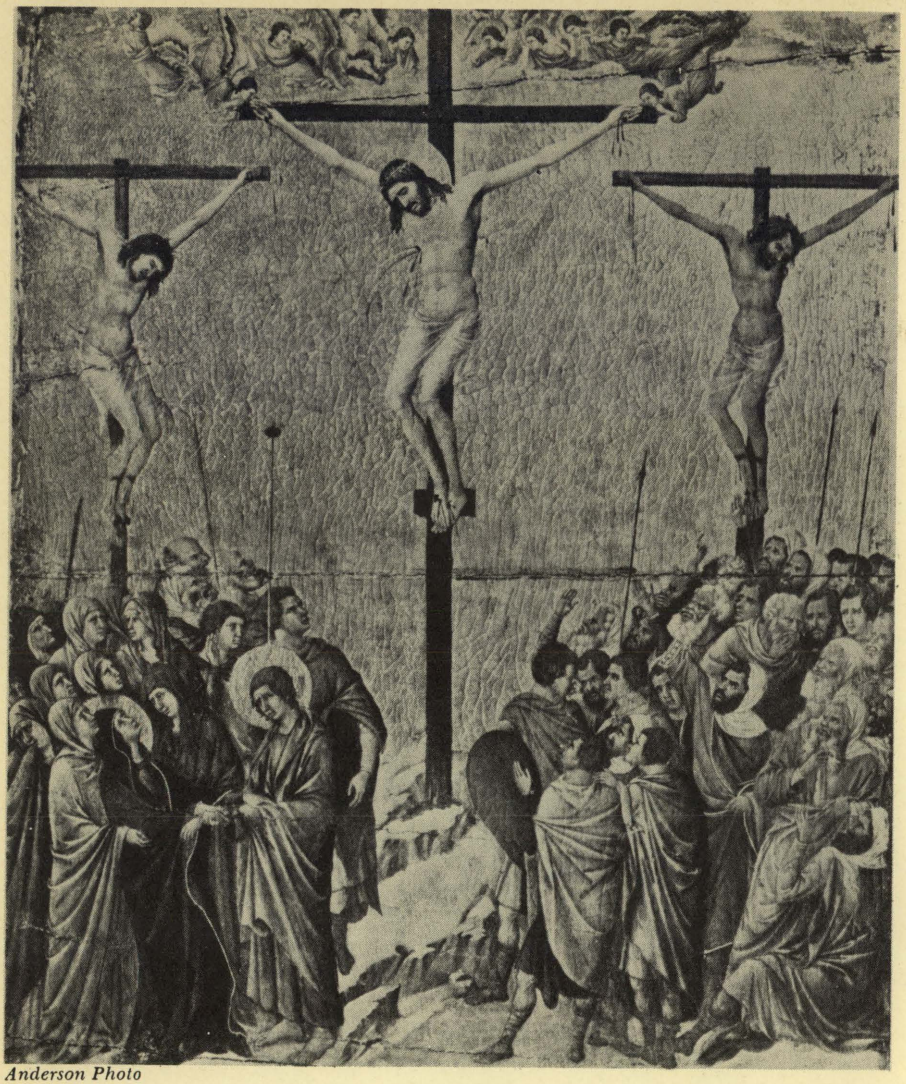
THE CRUCIFIXION by Giotto

"Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also His coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout."

Alinari Photo

THE CRUCIFIXION by Tintoretto

"And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS."



Anderson Photo

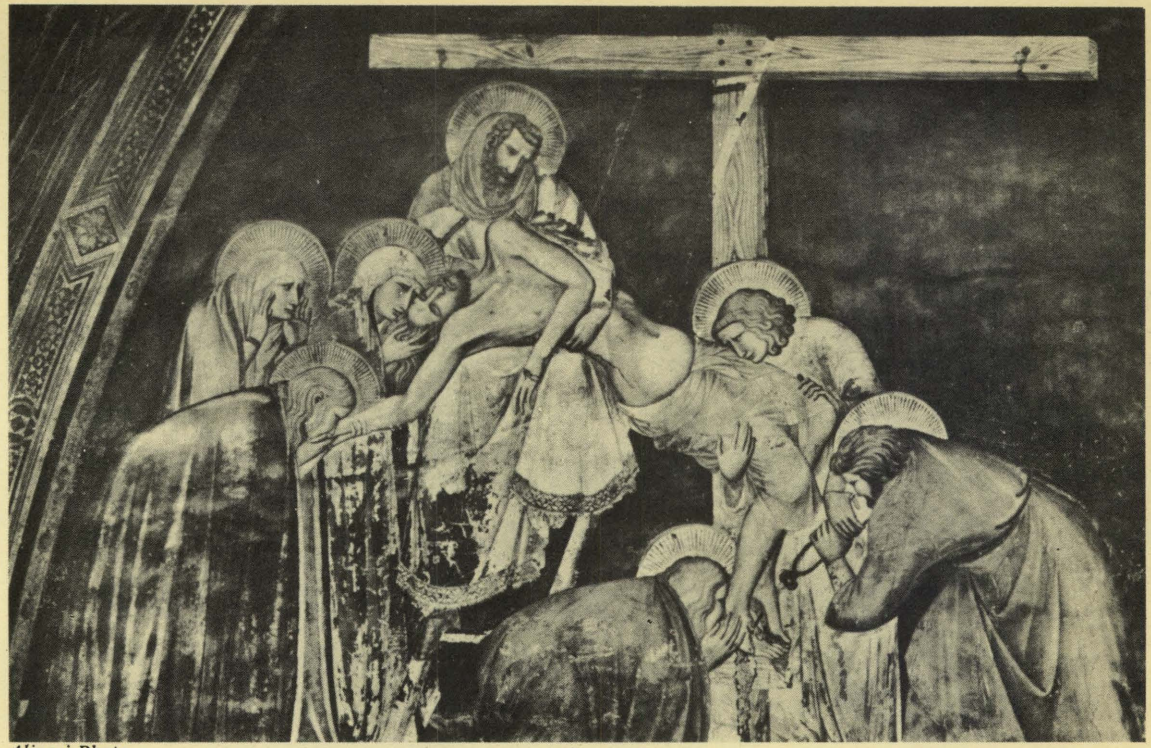
THE CRUCIFIXION by Duccio

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene."

Bruckmann Photo

CONSUMMATUM EST by Antonello Da Messina

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, 'It is finished': and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost."



Alinari Photo

THE DEPOSITION by P. Lorenzetti

"And after this Joseph of Arimathaea . . . besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus."

Brogi Photo

THE ENTOMBMENT by Fra Bartolommeo

"Then took they the body of Jesus and wound it in linen clothes with spices."

Alinari Photo

THE ENTOMBMENT by Titian

"Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus."

long been inhospitable to his works, the Opera which had closed its doors to him, the singers who had disdained his songs, the critics who had scoffed him—they were all represented."

Wolf spent forty-three years in this world; but all his important compositions were written during two short periods—from 1888 to 1890 and from 1895 to 1897. During the first period he poured out more than two hundred songs—settings of poems by the Swabian pastor, Eduard Mörike, by Goethe, by Josef von Eichendorff, and by the Swiss author, Gottfried Keller, in addition to the *Spanisches Liederbuch* and the first part of his *Italienisches Liederbuch.* During the second period he wrote three songs after Michelangelo, a comic opera, entitled *Der Corregidor,* the second volume of the *Italienisches Liederbuch,* and a portion of an opera, called *Manuel Veregas.* Many believe that the prolonged periods of utter sterility were due to insanity in its incipient stages.

It has become a commonplace to number Wolf among the incontestably great masters of the lied. We need not hesitate to mention him in the same breath with Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Robert Franz, and Richard Strauss. His songs have an unobtrusive completeness, which makes it unlikely that in their own way they will ever be surpassed. Their proper delivery presupposes artistry of the highest type. In consequence, only those singers who are attracted by depth and refinement rather than by tosh and trivialities are able to reveal to us the subtle magic of Wolf's lieder. A creator of his imposing stature is not for vocalists who live, move, and have their being in the muddy puddles of sham and mediocrity.

Choirs that are genuinely interested in music of abiding beauty will derive and dispense much edification by devoting their attention to *Thy Will Be Done, The Last Prayer, His Guiding Will, Grace From On High,* and *All Safe at Last to Thee* (The H. W. Gray Co., New York). These compositions have been edited by Clarence Dickinson.

Recent Recordings

DMITRI SZOSTAKOWICZ. *Symphony No. 5, Opus 47.* The Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski. —Young Szostakowicz is an extraordinary fellow. He is an important composer, and, in addition, he has the agility of a tomcat. He knows how to light on his feet. For a time he enjoyed high favor in Soviet-land; for a time he was kept in the

doghouse. Now he is a composer laureate once more. His *Fifth Symphony,* which purports to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the October Revolution, contains much meat and some flabby fat. Victor Album M-619.

FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY. *Symphony No. 5, in D Major (Reformation Symphony).* The Columbia Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra under Howard Barlow.—This work was written in commemoration of the tercentenary of the Augsburg Confession. It has elegance, but little depth. The subject-matter was beyond the scope of Mendelssohn's ability. *Ein' feste Burg* is used in the *Finale.* Columbia Album M-391.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN. *Symphony No. 2, in D Major.* The Boston Orchestra under Serge Koussevitzky.—A stirring performance of the irresistible masterpiece. Victor Album M-625.

GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL. *Concerto Grosso No. 6, in G Minor.* The London Symphony Orchestra under Felix Weingartner.—A scholarly reading of a work which deserves to be more widely known than it is. Columbia Album X-154.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART. *Concerto No. 4, in D Major, for Violin and Orchestra (K. 218).* Fritz Kreisler and the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Malcolm Sargent. —The magic of Mozart's writing, the high quality of Kreisler's violinism, and the fine musicianship of Dr. Sargent combine to make this recording one to be cherished. Victor Album M-623.

GIUSEPPE VERDI. An abridged version of *Otello,* given by Lawrence Tibbett, Giovanni Martinelli, Helen Jepson, and other singers in conjunction with the chorus and the orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera Company under Wilfred Pelletier. —Here we have excellent renditions of some of the high lights of Verdi's great opera. Victor Album M-620.

NICOLAI BEREZOWSKY. *Quartet No. 1, Opus 16.* The Coolidge String Quartet.—Berezowsky was born in Russia in 1900, but he has been a resident of the United States since 1922. His Quartet has originality and substance. Victor Album M-624.

MAX REGER. *Unaccompanied Suite in G Major, for 'Cello, Opus 131c, No. 1.* Emanuel Feuermann.—There is dumbfounding skill in this work. It is at once melodious and profound. Columbia Album X-152.

CLAUDE ACHILLE DEBUSSY. *Nocturnes: Nuages, Fetes, Sirènes.* The Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski.—Stokowski, a past master of the art of producing ravishingly beautiful orchestral tone, works wonders as he unfolds the magic of Debussy's deftly painted tone pictures. Victor Album M-630.

PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY. *Nutcracker Suite.* The Chicago Orchestra under Frederick Stock.—Even though Tchaikovsky's popular suite cannot be called great music, its unpretentious melodic charm has won thousands upon thousands of ardent admirers. Dr. Stock's reading is thoroughly in keeping with his sterling musicianship. Columbia Album M-395.

THE LITERARY SCENE

Read not to contradict and confute—nor to believe and take for granted—but to weigh and consider.

ALL UNSIGNED REVIEWS ARE BY MEMBERS OF THE STAFF

Remembrance of Things Past

HAPPY DAYS. 1880-1892. By H. L. Mencken. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. 1940. 313 pages. $2.75.

H. L. MENCKEN is turning sixty next September, and so his right to do a bit of reminiscing can hardly be questioned, even if he does go about it somewhat leisurely. For this volume he depends on his memories of the first twelve years of his life, and since he spent practically all that period in and near Baltimore, he draws a picture of life as it went on in that city in the eighties and early nineties—days when children could play safely on the streets, when boys yelled, "Cheese it!" and ran as soon as a policeman hove into sight, when crabs sold at ten cents a dozen, and when dandelions flourished and bloomed between the cobblestones.

While no stirring or unusual events are recounted but simply the story of a boy who grows up unexcitingly in comfortable circumstances, much that is of sociological and psychological interest enters into the tale. There are, for instance, the academic oddities of the private school of a certain Professor Friedrich Knapp; the folkways and little superstitions and other peculiarities of that era, which now seem strange and far-off even to those who grew up among them; the German hired girls who were corralled fresh at the Lloyd pier; the "blackamoors," who led a queer life in the alleys and side-streets and were obsessed with the fear of falling into the hands of the Johns Hopkins medical students, to be converted into anatomical specimens and maybe even be boiled down into medicine.

Of the aforementioned Professor Friedrich Knapp is related so novel a practice that it deserves a place in future histories of culture. It is the employment of "mass caning." "It often happened that he would detect three, four, or even five boys with unshined shoes or unwashed ears. He would order them to step forward a few paces and then line them up very precisely. When they had all got into the position called for by his command of *Drei* he would try to fetch their fundaments simultaneously with one swoop of an extra-long rattan. Sometimes he succeeded, and sometimes he failed. The favor-

ite spot in the line was naturally the one nearest him, for the boy who had it got the thick part of the rattan, swinging through a small arc, and was hence but little hurt. The boy at the far end got the thin and poisonous tip, swinging over an orbit long enough to give it the speed of a baseball and the bite of an adder's fang."

Your reviewer, in reading the book, wondered especially whether he would find, in this account of Mencken's early years, the key to some of the distinctive qualities of his literary productions. There appeared to be illuminating material on several points. For one thing, Mencken's writings carry a strong intellectual appeal, but they have no warmth and no soul. Now the record shows that the Mencken children were well fed and otherwise well provided for, but there is no evidence in it that the family was bound together in any tender, affectionate relationship. Such a relationship seems either to have been lacking or H. L. to have been constitutionally so insensible to it that it has left no memory in him. In either case there would be an explanation why his writings are so cold—*kalt wie eine Hundeschnauze.*

Mencken's anti-religious bias and his penchant for going out of his way to say blasphemous and irreverent things (as again in this book) are amply accounted for. He was sent to a Methodist Sunday school and later on to the Lutheran Sunday school of the Rev. Sylvanus Stall, where, he says, "there was little expounding of doctrine" and "the instruction, in so far as there was any at all, was predominantly ethical." But, for fear that the boy might nevertheless be influenced to some extent, his infidel father, with satanic thoroughness, deliberately set himself to undo by means of ridicule, any effect that the teaching might have had. The son raises this monument to the elder Mencken: "My father had not underestimated the potency of his evil influence: it left me an infidel as he was, and as his father had been before him."

Most of the book is interesting and amusing, though some of the typical Menckenesques, which were in their prime twenty years ago, are beginning to be decidedly senescent.

Made in England

LET THE PEOPLE SING. By J. B. Priestley. Harper & Brothers, New York. 351 pages. $2.50.

AN OLD CAPTIVITY. By Nevil Shute. William Morrow & Co., New York. 1940. 333 pages. $2.50.

THERE seems to be something to the contention that the last great English novelist just left the island and tried to forget everything. He was an Irishman, he moved to Paris, and he's still living there. At any rate the English have produced few first grade novelists since the turn of the century. Most novels since then have been slightly anemic, correct in technique, approximating all the standards for a good novel laid down by an American, Henry James, but simply lacking the blood and gristle making up a genuinely good

novel in the Fielding-Dickens-Gissing tradition.

Occasionally the current English novels have a spark of an idea; one finds in them a determined effort to achieve the lustiness and uncouth vigor of the American novels, but, as a rule, the overseas products are ever so slightly fusty. They make pleasant reading, oftentimes very exciting reading. (Your reviewer sat up until early morning reading *An Old Captivity*.) But after you have read the novels, what have you? This Priestley novel dangerously skirts the edge of boredom and cuteness. The Nevil Shute novel is satisfactory as long as the Jules Verne tradition is studiously kept in mind.

Let the People Sing tells the story of Timmy Tiverton, an out-of-work comedian, who happens to be sitting on a bench in Birchester Square when an IRA member exchanges suitcases with Timmy. At the right moment Timmy seizes the suitcase and hurls its ticking contents at an ugly statue. The explosion creates a terrific racket, and Timmy has to run from the police. While hiding in a baggage car he meets an exiled Czech professor whose passport has expired. The two men hit out for rural England. In no time at all they join a travelling medicine show which eventually reaches the dreary town of Dunbury. Mr. Hassock, owner of the medicine show, hires the professor, who happens to be a brilliant pianist, as the show's musician. Timmy gets the job of amusing the Dunburyites.

The better people of Dunbury are shocked when Mr. Hassock rents the town hall. The citizens of Dunbury are apathetic to Timmy's determination to make the people sing. Dunbury has succumbed to the mechanized manner of the twentieth-century because of the presence of a typically soulless American branch factory. But with the aid of the town band, an inebriated ex-Governor-General, and a troupe of ex-vaudevillians running an ultra-modern roadhouse, Timmy gets the Dunburyites to sing and to find in themselves sources of enjoyment and entertainment.

Nevil Shute, to the contrary, avoids people. Cyril Lockwood, a noted Oxford archeologist, wants to fly to Greenland to make aerial pictures of ancient Viking ruins. Since he's well-heeled with money he is able to buy a new American plane and hire an out-of-work pilot. The disturbing element in the professor's plans is his daughter, Alix, a thoroughly obnoxious little snob who dislikes the pilot because he has never heard of Sibelius and Brahms. Finally, the daughter joins the expedition, much to the annoyance of the pilot, Donald Ross.

The flight from England, via Iceland, to Greenland is a truly exciting adventure story. Although the flight centers about such comparatively trivial matters as pouring gasoline into the tanks, fighting weariness and fog, watching the complicated dials of the modern aeroplane, Nevil Shute is able to use these little details to build up a tense drama of man fighting nature. Donald Ross eventually discovers that Alix is not entirely obnoxious. His ordinarily well-run life is upset by a strange dream in which Alix plays a prominent part. It would

be unfair to the reader to reveal the strangely unusual ending.

Now a novel, to be above the average, must have more in it than a story. There must be a motivating idea, a conflict of ideas, a vision which the novelist permits his reader to see as the tale develops. Priestley's Czech professor expresses the idea back of *Let the People Sing* thus: "I am thinking of the inward style of life of how a man thinks of himself. I am not only putting the smokers before the ashtrays in importance, but I am thinking of what it is that brings the smokers together. And in the world of the mind and spirit it is possible for all to be great, privileged and wealthy. . . . Life on this level is not something to be tolerated if there happens to be time for it after the serious business of the world has been done. It *is* the serious business of the world—this life of beauty, wisdom and love—and we only make things and buy and sell them in order to sustain that real life." Nobly spoken, but the novel lacks the depth of the statement. The development of the idea is not sustained. It is as though Priestley grew tired of writing the novel near the end. He might have written a powerful, artistic statement against all nationalists and all those advocating self-interest in economics. He did not.

Donald Ross lived for his job and for the perfect functioning of his aeroplane engine. His is the epitome of the dedicated craftsman. When Alix says, "Do you think you'll get him to rest if his engine needs attention?" she summarizes perfectly the character of the aviator. He has a job to do, and he does it. With all the isms afloat today and with the smashing of ideologies on the right and left it is comforting to read about a man who has a job and does that job to the best of his ability.

Nevil Shute, himself an experienced aviator, writes the terse, exact language of the wireless. He packs adventure and meaning into every episode. Sparing in detail, he is able to paint a full-bodied picture. When he dallies with the subconscious and with the meaning of Brattalid, the abandoned Viking village in Greenland, he loses smoothness.

Of the two novels, *An Old Captivity* will have a wider appeal. Those interested in present-day England will find *Let the People Sing* an interesting study of Englishmen living in a Middletown in transition.

Make Way for Utopia

UNION NOW. By Clarence Streit. Harper & Brothers, New York. 315 pages. $3.00.

WE HAD intended to defer the review of this book until the new, fourteenth, edition would make its appearance, but the nationwide interest which *Union Now* has aroused, the lectures on the subject which the author has been delivering throughout the length and breadth of the land, and the numerous requests for an appraisal of its contents have combined to render it advisable not to delay further in bringing this book to the attention of the readers of THE CRESSET. Since *Union Now* first made its appearance a year and a half ago, it has gone through thir-

teen editions; it has opened new channels of thought for students of political economy; it has resulted in the organization of the "Inter-Democracy Federal Unionists"—a group which is devoted to the promotion of the plan for "union now" which Streit advocates.

What does the author mean by "union now"? He means the union of the democracies of the world into a great federal republic based upon their common democratic principle of government in the interest of individual freedom. This union would be designed: "*a.* to provide an effective common government in our democratic world in those fields where such common government will clearly serve man's freedom better than separate governments; *b.* to maintain independent national governments in all other fields where such government will best serve man's freedom; and *c.* to create by its constitution a nucleus world government capable of growing into universal world government peacefully and as rapidly as such growth will best serve man's freedom."

According to Streit's plan this union would include the following fifteen democracies: United States of America, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, Ireland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland. Others would be added in the course of time, upon subscribing to the principles of the Union. Each citizen of these democracies would become a citizen of the new international union, which would think in terms of men rather than of nations. The super-government thus formed would have a capital of its own, a parliamentary system, and a judiciary.

The union of these democracies would include the following factors: 1. A union citizenship; 2. a union defense force; 3. a union customs-free economy; 4. a union money; 5. a union postal and communications system. In this way the union would afford a closely integrated system of internal administration for the greater benefit of its citizenry and at the same time present a united front against the outside world. Thus it would capitalize to the greatest possible extent on its wealth of resources and at the same time render itself practically invulnerable to attack from its enemies.

BUT while this gigantic nation would have such a closely unified system in those fields where a strong centralized government would seem to offer the greatest possible benefit, it would guarantee to each member-nation the right to govern independently all its home affairs, to retain its own language and customs, its own particular form of government, and its own capitalist, social, or other economic system.

The ultimate object of this union should be "to encourage the nations outside it and the colonies inside it to seek to unite with it instead of against it with the result that in the course of time a world union would come into being." The author points out very cogently that this union could be developed along the same principles and pattern as the Ameri-

can union, and argues that the difficulties which originally stood in the way of the union of the American colonies were no greater than those which apparently impede the realization of this proposed inter-democratic union. Streit argues that such a union is a logical political and economic organism, since no two states in the aforementioned group of fifteen have been at war with each other for over one hundred years and that there would, therefore, be no smoldering animosities or perennial national grudges to overcome. The union would be so constituted that neither Britain nor the United States—the two largest constituent commonwealths—could gain absolute control of the government.

THE union would be logical, according to the author's version, also because of the common economic resources which it would be able to muster. These fifteen nations already have a near-monopoly on world power. They possess 89.6% of the world's gold reserves, 65% of the foreign trade, 46.3% of the world's area and 43.1% of the world's population. They produce 95.8% of the world's nickel, 95.2% of the rubber, 82.2% of the sulphur, 72.7% of the iron ore, 72.2% each of the gold and the tin, 66% of the petroleum, 65% of the copper and an equal percentage of the coal, 64.7% of the cotton—and so the list could be extended to cover most of the world's essential raw materials—minerals, fuels, textiles, chemicals, and foodstuffs—as well as its manufacturing and transportation resources. Streit points out the obvious advantages which would result from the breaking down of the existing international barriers and the converting of what is now international trade—with all its complications—into purely domestic trade.

Union Now points out the advantages of freedom and of security which this plan would offer: the abolition of international boundaries and the pooling of national interests and resources would make for the breaking down of the jealousies and disputes and rivalries which now exist and would permit the citizens of this greater commonwealth to enjoy a far greater measure of freedom. Greater freedom would result in better order within the boundaries of this great federation and greater security against any perils which might threaten from without. The author's thesis that freedom and love are inseparable may be an effort to develop a Christian evaluation of government.

The author speaks of "union" in distinction to "league" or "alliance." He states that a league is a government of governments, by governments and for governments, whereas a union is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. An alliance is simply a looser, more primitive form of league, one that operates secretly through diplomatic tunnels rather than openly through regular assemblies. It is based on the same principles as a league—namely that the state is the great and important factor, rather than the individual. Streit points out very convincingly the inherent weakness of any alliance—a contention for which

recent history brings much proof. He also emphasizes the repeated failures which have followed in the wake of international leagues, and particularly of the ill-starred League of Nations formed after the World War. He argues that a union would embody all the good points of such an international league, with none of its glaring flaws and defects.

THE author deals telling blows to the dogma of nationalism, which in contemporary history has actually been deified in some parts of the world. He says that nationalism has changed from a beneficent into a maleficent force, whose trend is downward. "Nationalism," he says, "would only fetter man's genius in the name of man's freedom." Streit says that the nationalistic ideal is historically a parvenu; originally men were bound by the ties of religion rather than by the ties of nationality, and there existed religious patriotism almost to the exclusion of national patriotism. Nationalism first gained momentum as a means of furthering stronger homogeneous political organization; and, at least in accomplishing the unification of Italy and of Germany, it served the cause of human freedom. But now the ideal of nationalism has grown into a veritable Frankenstein, and mankind must without delay be freed from its curse. Men today "are mature enough to understand that the way to man's freedom cannot possibly lie in worshipping the accident of birth." The author agrees with H. G. Wells, who declares, "Our true nationality is mankind." Streit's analysis of the philosophy of nationalism appeared to this reviewer to be one of the most convincing and most valuable features of the book.

From the religious standpoint Streit makes a number of statements which are definitely objectionable to anyone who reveres God's Word. For example, on page 227 he states that Mohammedanism "freed not only man from the *myth* that he was made of earth, but woman from the *myth* that she was made of man." The author extols Mohammedanism as advocating a higher degree of individual liberty than Christianity—although he asserts that Christianity in its progressive development evolved a far more rigid and narrow philosophy than Jesus originally proclaimed. Jesus is regarded by the author as being a mere man who, in the course of time, came to be deified by his followers. We also raised our eyebrows at this: "Then came Jesus teaching men to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's—to decide each for himself what he owes to the gods of other men and what he owes to the god within himself." We were gratified, however, to observe that the author correctly ascribes to Jesus a supreme concern for the individual and that he acclaims the Reformation as a movement which revived appreciation of the dignity and autonomy of the individual soul, freeing man from the fetters of Papal authority.

Union Now was written before the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, and the author's treatment of Soviet Russia, while not markedly sympathetic,

is at least tolerant. We are awaiting the appearance of the fourteenth edition to see to what extent he has changed his attitude toward Russia.

Now, what shall we say of the plan for "union now" which Streit has formulated? It is a little too much like the millennium. It is a dream which one could only wish might come true. Possible? Well, perhaps. But probable? Hardly. And imminent? Certainly not.

There are certain obstacles which would appear to block most effectively the attainment of the author's objectives. For one thing, he overlooks the national pride and self-interest which long centuries of independent national existence and self-seeking have bred in most of the nations which he would include in his proposed union. We cannot conceive, for example, of Britain or France relinquishing any of their prized possessions, tangible or intangible, to further the interests of Switzerland or Denmark—or, for that matter, of the United States. Their past performances do not seem to warrant any such optimistic view. Furthermore, Streit's analogy between the American union and the proposed inter-democratic union is noticeably weak. This cannot be predicated of the proposed union of democracies.

At the same time, however, we feel that Streit's book is a definite contribution to the solution of current world problems. Out of his dream may come some progressive step, such as a customs union, the pooling of certain natural resources, the co-ordination of economic policies, and, in consequence, a greater measure of mutual understanding between nations with the result that the world may become a better, a more secure place in which to live.

We are not so sanguine as to look for the practical realization of Streit's plan in the immediate future, or even in our life-time. If we were to guess, we would say that it will never be realized. But Streit's ambitious program, aimed at the furtherance of mankind's good, is at least a vision. And where there is no vision the people perish.

THOMAS COATES

American Made

RIVER OF EARTH. By James Still. The Viking Press, New York. 1940. 245 pages. $2.50.

NATIVE SON. By Richard Wright. Harper & Brothers, New York. 1940. 359 pages. $2.50.

THESE two novels offer a meaty text for an essay on what is right with American writing. There may be much that is wrong with what our American writers are doing, but the wrong is quickly counter-balanced by the brilliantly vigorous writing of a younger generation from whom we are just beginning to hear. With the decline of Sinclair Lewis, Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, and the H. L. Mencken school there was a moment when American writers felt the urge to be proletariat-conscious and to make the class struggle the dominating motive of all short stories or novels. With the singing of the German-Russian non-aggression pact

a strange stillness has seized the section of America's writers and critics who held such a parochial view.

As Granville Hicks demonstrates, the great tradition of American literature has always been critical, "critical of greed, cowardice, and meanness. . . . It has also been a hopeful literature, touched again and again with a passion for brotherhood, justice, and intellectual honesty." American literature has been a literature of rebellion. Hence one need not be surprised that for a time the Marxist mood was seized upon as a dependable critique.

Here are two dissimilar novels, one very frágile, the other a devastatingly cruel and bitter commentary on our national life. Both novels offer vivid proof that the great tradition of protest and rebellion in American literature is very much alive.

River of Earth tells in the first person the story of a group of poor Kentucky miners. It is the story of the Baldridge family: Bracky, the husband, his wife, and their children, as well as a brace of shiftless relatives. In quiet, spare, lean mountaineer words we are let into the life of a group of people who wring out a meager living from mining. "I bore eight chaps, and not one died of a bullet," says Grandma Middleton proudly. Grandma lost her husband in a feud with Aus Coggins. We read how the Baldridges and the Middletons starve while unemployed, and we hear of Bracky's search for work in the mines and his stubborn refusal to farm or accept relief. A touching scene in the novel is the description of the death and burial of the youngest Baldridge. So skillful is James Still's writing that the episode of Saul Hignight's calf with a corncob in its throat assumes dramatic proportions.

River of Earth is the account of a poor people hunting security, longing for stability. Mother says, "Forever I've wanted to set us down in a lone spot, a place certain and enduring, with room to swing arm and elbow, a garden-piece for fresh victuals, and a cow to furnish milk for the baby. . . . I'm longing to set me down shorely and raise my chaps proper."

The people of *River of Earth* are the dispossessed, but so are the people in the tragedy of *Native Son*. James Still's Baldridges and Middletons are white. In *Native Son* the actors are black.

Richard Wright, a young Negro writer, has had one novel published, *Uncle Tom's Children*. The promise of that novel has been ably fulfilled in his second book. In *Native Son* there is angry, tense writing on that ancient problem: the Negro in the United States. The novel is frankly propaganda, but we are certain that Mr. Wright would say that all good and great writing is propaganda, that a writer must burn with indignation before he can say what needs to be said. Certainly this novel had to be written, certainly the case of this half-demented, absolutely unmoral and immoral Negro, Bigger Thomas, is a story one can read with pity and understanding. The implications of *Native Son* are far-reaching and important. There are twelve million Negroes in our country.

Native Son is not a pleasant novel, nor is it one to be recommended to all people. It has much in it to violate a Christian's sense of conduct. It is the horrible story of Bigger Thomas, shiftless, good-for-nothing son of Widow Thomas. His brother and sister are afraid of him. His companions in the poolhall and petty criminal escapades are afraid of him. He has a mean, irritable disposition. His girl, Bessie, says, "All you ever caused me was trouble, just plain black trouble." Bigger murders her.

Through the kindness of a philanthropic family, the Daltons, Bigger is hired as their chauffeur. In less than twenty-four hours he has accidentally killed the daughter, Mary. It occurs to him that he can become wealthy through sending ransom notes to the family after he has disposed of Mary Dalton's body. Before his end, Bigger has committed theft, murder, blackmail. He has become the object of Chicago's largest manhunt. When he is captured he is speedily placed on trial. Despite the eloquent plea of Max, a noted liberal lawyer, for mercy, Bigger is sentenced to die in the electric chair.

Native Son is written in a prose which accumulates speed and dramatic intensity with each episode. The descriptive writing, especially the action of the Chicago mob during the hunt and capture of Bigger Thomas, is of a high order. The characters are soundly delineated, although none become thoroughly rounded. Bigger's mother, the attorney, Max, and the Negro preacher who attempts to console the condemned man emerge as personalities.

The problem which Mr. Wright handles in *Native Son* resolves itself simply into the question, Why did Bigger Thomas act as he did? Why did he kill, steal, bully? "It was fear that had made him fight Gus in the poolroom. If he had felt certain of himself . . . he would not have fought." He was afraid of himself, of the whites who forced him to live in restricted areas. His problem was the problem of the mistreatment which he and all his people receive at the hands of the whites.

When Bigger is in his cell, the Negro preacher movingly persuades him to look to the Cross for final and lasting solace. Bigger accepts the wooden cross and wears it. Then, in one of the most powerful scenes in the novel, he throws away the cross and renounces his faith when he sees a burning Ku Klux Klan cross set up by Christian whites. "The eyes and faces about him were not at all the way the black preacher's had been when he had prayed about Jesus and His love, about His dying upon the Cross. The cross the preacher had told him about was bloody, not flaming; meek, not militant. It had made him feel awe and wonder, not fear and panic. It had made him want to kneel and cry, but this cross made him want to curse and kill. . . . It gripped him: that cross was not the cross of Christ, but the cross of the Ku Klux Klan. He had a cross of salvation round his throat and they were burning one to tell him that they hated him. . . . He felt betrayed." Bigger throws away his cross and prefers instead the consoling words of Max.

Bigger had a fair trial. But Max points out that it was the mode of life in America that should also be sent to the electric chair, not only the murderer. "Thwarted life expresses itself in fear and hate and crime," Max says. "Consider the mere physical aspect of our civilization. . . . Imagine a man walking amid such a scene, a part of it, and yet knowing that it is not for him!"

Native Son will set many Americans by their ears. It is not written half-heartedly, but with burning, angry strokes from the Negro point of view. Bigger's end is pathetic. Cheated of his faith, robbed of the right to earn a living, he must find weak consolation in the dawning realization that all men are brothers. Beyond that his hope dare not go. As Mrs. Fisher writes in the introduction to this novel, we have here "a human soul in hell because it is sick with a deadly spiritual sickness."

It is hard to be complacent about American life after reading *Native Son*. Although the author does not use the word, here is sin, black and deep.

Enjoying Botany

FLOWERING EARTH. By Donald Culross Peattie. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York. 260 pages. $2.50.

SPECIALISTS in botany often become so involved in their study that they cannot see the woods for the trees. For them the *Flowering Earth,* in its grand sweep over this "green world," will prove a refreshing diversion. And many of the almost poetic passages in this delightfully informal book will seem startling or, indeed, incredible to the average reader. As Mr. Peattie himself says, "All the things that would make it thorough and dull, I have tried to leave out. . . . This is my story; some of biology's great commandments are in it, a little detective writing, a good deal of the history of green growing. I have put in some of my own adventures, too, and a lot of my own enjoyment. If anybody learns botany out of it, it will be by the way."

And so it is. The author's own life serves as the basis of the story, and we can well feel the thrill of the boy collecting "in the cool woods south along the mountains to Carolina," the student at Harvard making his first extract of pure chlorophyll, and the first job in the office of the Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction Bureau. A chapter on chlorophyll and on what a plant is follows. You will be surprised to know that "no one can tell you what a plant is"—a statement literally true when some of the small microscopic one-celled organisms, such as the dinoflagellates, are studied. Some very questionable statements are made in this chapter, such as, "What the young groping fingers (of the blind child) cannot perceive is that woman and tree are made of the same life stuff."

The mysterious qualities of protoplasm are next personalized, indeed almost deified. In fact, all through this story Mr. Peattie, in common with most other popularizers of science, accepts the evolutionary theory of the origin of this world and its great variety of life as a proven fact, indeed as the greatest generalization

of modern biology. Accordingly we find him falling back on Svante Arrhenius' idea that minute bacteria-like forms of life or spores passed through the cold of interstellar space, fell on our planet, and over periods of millions of years evolved into the marvelously complex web of life we now see. Just why this migration theory makes the problem of the origin of life any simpler is difficult to understand. If the spontaneous origin of life must be insisted on, one might better have it developing here instead of on some other star. Or does he really mean to postulate that these primordial spores were, like God, eternal?

Assuming evolution as proven, the various "ages" of plant life are described: the first algas, the seaweeds, and finally the great fern forests, so abundant and luxuriant as to give rise to the carboniferous, or coal, age. The interesting carbon-dioxide exhaustion theory is developed. It holds that these great forests of ferns, giant Calamites (of which the horsetails are the only living representatives) and Lycopodiums apparently did not decay completely under the water evidently so abundant at that time. Therefore the insulating blanket of carbon-dioxide was gradually depleted, thus allowing the heat of the earth to break away. This led to ice formation at the poles and the first glacial period.

Certain misstatements occur in this book, such as the one that diatoms appear first in the Jurassic "age," or formation. This, if true, would be most remarkable, for diatoms are now world-wide in their distribution. According to Dana's *Manual of Geology,* however, eight "living" species of diatoms are found as fossils in the coal beds of England, deposited, according to current orthodox theory, millions of years before the Jurassic.

The age of "Conifers and Cycads," and the "Rise of Modern Floras," are next dramatically pictured. It would be interesting and enlightening for some author, talented with Mr. Peattie's ability to write in popular style, to present a picture of the early earth in terms of the alternative hypothesis. This theory is that the geologic formations represent separation of floras in space instead of succession in periods of time. The assemblages of plants and animals found in the various strata of the earth may very well be explained on an ecological basis, and, when properly placed together as existing contemporaneously, give us a picture of a marvelously well-ordered world.

THE last and most interesting portion of the book was written while the author lived at Quien Sabe, a home with a sort of rundown, amateur botanical garden in a coastal California town. The garden alliances of the bees and flowers, dormancy of the seed, and growth are considered. The marvelous new growth hormones now being discovered, are described almost as minor deities, and again the idea of the cycle of life being eternal is dwelt upon. Hormone research is actually, as Peattie says, "the growing tip of botanical science." Finally the web of life is sketched by describing the rôle played by those parasites and scavengers of

the plant world, the fungi, often weird structures, beautiful in an evanescent, ghostly way. The parasitic fungi and the symbiotic types, such as the lichens, are used to introduce the really great biologic truth that all the forms of life are so closely interdependent as to form a great web, or pattern, each part of which is dependent upon the activities of the rest.

Many passages in this book, of which the following is typical, are very beautiful: "The glen was my book, that April I was twenty. I idled over it, watching the rhododendron snow its petals on the dark pools that spun them 'round in a swirl of brown foam and beached them on a tiny coast glittering with mica and fool's gold."

W. E. LAMMERTS

Embarrassment

"I am not a prude, and yet I must admit that it embarrasses me hideously to sit by while any ancestor of mine from grandmother down undertakes to tell a torrid story. Invariably I have the same sinking feeling which assails me when a clergyman seeks to unbend and become rowdy for the laity."—HEYWOOD BROUN

Slogans

"We are living in a time, when out of defeat and poverty of heart, man clings to slogans, and sinks his powers into the exhaustion of obedience. He lets his creative mind sleep, since he finds it too much trouble to awaken it."—PHYLLIS BOTTOME

Magic Words

"Some of mankind's most terrible misdeeds have been committed under the spell of certain magic words or phrases."—JAMES BRYANT CONANT

Subtraction

"A Congressman never opens his mouth without subtracting from the sum of human knowledge."—THOMAS B. REED

THE CRESSET SURVEY OF BOOKS

BY THE EDITORS

A brief glance at recent books—

THE SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF MOSES AND OF REPRESENTATIVE PROPHETS

By Hartwig Dierks. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis. 1940. 158 pages. 50 cents.

SOME well-meaning individuals have the naïve idea that every application of Christ's requirements to the facts of every-day life is equivalent to preaching the social gospel. The author is apparently quite aware of such individuals and, therefore, strives valiantly from start to finish to shield himself against their javelins and darts. In the meanwhile, however, he does make plain that he does not share their views. He represents Isaiah as teaching "that true religion concerns itself with every-day life and is a part of oneself." He becomes even more specific when, on page 107, he writes, "Put the gospel of Jesus Christ to work; show that it is a living power within you."

The author relates what God's great prophets had to say about social problems in their day and then shows how this applies to modern industrial slavery and speed-up systems, family life, politics, the amassing of fortunes, the building of monopolies, and the like.

Although this book is a doctoral dissertation, the style is simple and the language non-technical, so that it may be read with ease.

HEAD OF THE HOUSE

By Grace Livingston Hill. J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia. 1940. 299 pages. $2.00.

According to a count of the titles listed on the fly-leaf of this novel, *Head of the House* is Mrs. Hill's sixty-second novel. Mrs. Hill's publishers state that her novels enjoy great popularity and a wide sale.

WHAT'S YOUR ALLERGY?

By Laurence Farmer, M.D., and George J. Hexter. Random House, New York. 234 pages. $2.00.

Why do some people react violently whenever peanuts are in the vicinity, and why do others go berserk whenever lima beans are insinuated into a harmless salad? Dr. Farmer offers a popular account of

the troubles of allergic people and of what is being done to relieve their sufferings. The history of allergy does not really begin until 1901, when Charles Richet, Professor of Physiology at the University of Paris and one of the great scientists of the twentieth-century, discovered the phenomenon of anaphylaxis. It is comforting to know that allergy is never innate but is acquired in the course of the individual's life. According to Dr. Farmer, those liable to infections of the mucosa and the bronchi and to gastric and intestinal disturbances are in danger of becoming at some time or other allergic. There still remains to be discovered a common denominator underlying allergy. Every victim of an allergy, real or imagined, should by all means read this informative book.

Cure All

"They take a paper and they read the headlines,
So they've heard of unemployment and they've heard of breadlines,
And they philanthropically cure them all
By getting up a costume charity ball."—OGDEN NASH

The MARCH Magazines

Each month THE CRESSET *presents a check list of important articles in leading magazines which will be of interest to our readers.*

Scribner's Commentator

Let's Let God Save the King

By GENE SUTHERLAND

This timely article advocates a hard-boiled attitude on our part toward "our British cousins" and their clever propaganda, if we are to keep out of the war. British propaganda is a threat to American democracy. Mr. Sutherland points out that we are not in great danger of adopting communism, nor do the German-American Bund and other organizations of that ilk cut a very wide swath across the American scene; but our real danger lies in the British propaganda, which is a kind of goldenrod that grows rampant wherever the seed is dropped. British propaganda played a vital part in drawing us into the World War. It will do so again unless we are careful and face the isolation issue realistically. In answer to the question of whether our nation could survive a Hitler-dominated Canada on the north, Mr. Sutherland says: "This line of talk misses the boat entirely, for with the collapse of the British crown Canada will become, as the United States long ago became, a new American nation taking its place as an independent federation on the world scene."

I Win Contests

By FLORENCE BYE

The present popular indoor sport in America is to try to win a contest. The radio, newspaper, and magazine ads are luring the American public into this game. To win an automobile, a radio, $5,000, a refrigerator, and what not by solving a puzzle, naming a baby, telling why "I like Eno toothpaste," etc. That is what the average American is engaged in during his spare time. The author tells in an interesting manner that the average person has very little chance to win in these contests because there is a host of

professionals who spend practically all their time at these contests. One may take a correspondence course in contest winning. Amateurs, beware! Don't spend your money foolishly.

Dope—"Brave" Japan's New Weapon

By CARL CROW

Carl Crow, who spent many years in Shanghai as an advertising man, tells us that at the present time narcotics, opium, morphine, heroin, are the spearhead of the Japanese military invasion of China. He charges that Japan is through her army systematically using dope as a military weapon. This is something new in the world. Advance guards of dope peddlers debauch populations, particularly the young men of fighting age, and thus pave the way for easier army victories. "Pestilence and war historically go together, but it has been left to the Japanese to find a way in which to make pestilence pay for war." He brings this quotation for evidence out of their own mouths: "The use of narcotics is unworthy a superior race like the Japanese. Only inferior races that are decadent like the Chinese, Europeans, and the East Indians are addicted to the use of narcotics. This is why they are destined to become our slaves and eventually disappear." It is taken from a pamphlet distributed to all Japanese soldiers.

Fortune

Fortune Survey

Sixty-four and two-tenths per cent of the American people are convinced that "our form of government, based on the Constitution, is as near perfect as it can be, and no important changes should be made in it"; 19.2 per cent hold that "the Constitution has served its purpose well, but it has not kept up with the times and should be thoroughly revised to make it fit present-day needs"; 5.2 per cent believe that "the systems of private capitalism and democracy are breaking down, and we might as well accept the fact that sooner or later we shall have to have a new form of government"; 11.4 per cent "don't know"—61.5 per cent think the government should provide for all people who have no other means of obtaining a living (no: 27.8; don't know: 7.1). If this should mean: a) higher taxes for business—the vote is 51.5 yes, 37 no, 11.5 don't know; b) higher taxes for themselves—47.5, 41.5, 11; c) higher retail prices—47.8, 41.8, 10.4; d) more government competition with industry—28.5, 50.5, 21; e) depriving labor of right to strike—27.5, 52.6, 19.9; f)

end of capitalistic system—13, 63.1, 23.9; g) governmental assignment of jobs—12.7, 72.8, 14.5. —On the question of whether the amount of money anyone can earn in a year should be limited by law, 23.9 vote yes, 70 no, and 6.1 don't know.

The Aircraft Boom

Technical superiority and mass production will place American aircraft makers in a position to dominate the world market after the war, just as U.S. automobile makers, for the same reasons, dominated the world automobile market after the World War. By January the American aircraft industry had on its books more than $600,000,000 in unfilled orders, nearly 60 per cent of this representing foreign military orders. However, the domestic market is also growing. Present authorizations in the preparedness drive call for 6,500 more planes for our army and navy, and this number may be further increased. Revenue passenger-miles of domestic airlines totaled 665,000,000 for 1939, an increase of nearly 40 per cent over 1938, and existing transport equipment was unable to handle the peak loads. 3000 private planes, costing from $995 to $3,000, were sold last year. Taught by the experiences of the last war, aircraft makers are keeping plant expansion at a minimum and are plowing back their profits into surplus, where they will help to buffer the shocks of post-war conditions.

Forum

The War to End Europe

By WILLIAM HENRY CHAMBERLIN

Are there grounds for believing that the overthrow of Hitler would mark the beginning of permanent peace and civilized living? One would like to believe that, but there is less basis for such a faith than there was for the faith that the Kaiser's overthrow would bring peace and security to the world. In that earlier day there was some hope that a new world order might be built on a community of nations or on socialism, but both these possibilities have proved illusory—the one in the League of Nations, the other in Russia. No, all the indications are that Europe's future can be read in Thucydides' history of the long agony of the Peloponnesian War—"an indefinite cycle of wars and revolutions, each more senseless than the one which preceded it, each dragging civilization to a lower level," and Japan and Russia reaping the profits. The fateful error has been that Allied diplomacy, instead of setting Hitler to fight Stalin, has

brought the two together. Americans should recognize that this is no simple struggle between light and darkness, but an infernal mêlée, the duration of which is uncertain, and the future scope and forms of which are unpredictable.

Can New Orleans Come Back?

By HAMILTON BASSO

It would be a mistake to suppose that political corruption in Louisiana began, or even reached its high, with Kingfish Huey Long. On the contrary, "there was *less* grafting of public funds under him *than in any administration since the Civil War.*" From Reconstruction days on, graft has not only been regarded as legitimate in New Orleans, but as just. During the period 1869-1895 the Louisiana Lottery controlled city and state, and after that there was an air-tight alliance for many years between the city administration and the red-light district. After Huey's death the triumvirate Maestri-Weiss-Leche inaugurated a terrific reign of corruption in Louisiana, which is just ending—not primarily because the moral sense of the people would not stand for it, but because the Federal government intervened. Whether the basic situation in New Orleans will become any better is doubtful. If it is to improve, its people must shake off their apathy, become socially conscious and politically mature, and at last prove true for their city the democratic premise that the people can govern themselves properly.

The Atlantic Monthly

The Road Not Taken

By DAVID L. COHN

A long, carefully considered article which discusses our neutrality in the present World War. Although ninety-six per cent of the American people, according to a recent Gallup poll, oppose our entrance into the war, still our neutrality is definitely tilted in favor of the Allies. Mr. Cohn analyzes that neutrality and our evident composure over the fact that the Allies might lose. The writer is decidedly pro-British in his arguments and complains that we are not permitting ourselves to become emotional about the struggle. That's one viewpoint.

What Substitute for War?

By CHARLES A. LINDBERGH

Another viewpoint, the isolationist, is thoroughly explained by Mr. Lindbergh in a penetrating article. Mr. Lindbergh doubts whether either side is right or wrong. He believes that the British, French, and Germans should

make common cause against the greater menace of the Asiatic hordes. "The vital need at this time is not to decide who is at fault in the war in Europe, or to criticize the vacillating policies that caused it, or to argue over our concepts of right and wrong. . . . The answer is in sharing influence and empire among a sufficient number of their peoples to make sure that they control an overwhelming military strength." Mr. Lindbergh thinks it is immaterial who wins the war. That's another viewpoint.

The Purpose of Biography

By ALBERT JAY NOCK

Mr. Nock delivers some telling attacks against the modern commercial biography. He claims that modern biography and autobiography aims to hit the lowest common denominator of public taste and intelligence. Likewise, modern biographers foster "the erroneous notion that knowing something *about* a subject, or even knowing a great deal about him, is the same thing, or just as good, as knowing the subject himself. . . . I suspect that the popular appetite for 'readable' biography is symptomatic not only of a low and prurient curiosity, but also, when this motive is not dominant, of a wish to live exclusively on predigested cultural food." If publishers will heed Mr. Nock's advice, biographies will soon become a minor venture in the business of publishing books.

Harper's

The War and the British Middle Class

By IVOR BROWN

This article discusses war taxation in Great Britain and its inevitable effects particularly upon the standards of middle class life. In September, 1939, for example, the income tax rate was raised from 27½ per cent (5s. 6d. in the pound) to 35 per cent (7s.) with the prospect of further increases as the war continues. "The middle class is 'taking it.' But it can 'take it' only by serious reductions in the standard of living, reductions which must certainly alter the surface and perhaps the foundations of English life." The author's claim that the heavy taxes will mean the elimination of many of the "public schools" (public only in the sense that they are open to those who can afford to pay the charges) was confirmed by an Associated Press article of March 6, which quoted Sir Cyril Norwood, former headmaster of famed Harrow, as stating that the burden of war taxation will result in an insufficient number of parents "who can afford to pay

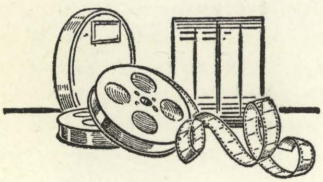
£200 a year for the education of a single boy." The same article reported that, in the debate in the House of Commons on the $200,000,000 annual educational budget, H. B. Lees-Smith declared that "more than 90 per cent of the public schools will have to close down after the war if they are to be dependent on the same classes which go there now." Without a doubt, "if this can be maintained as a war in which nobody grows rich, the leveling influence will be enormous."

Shadow over Wall Street

By STUART CHASE

Of particular interest in this discussion is the consideration of the question whether or not the declining growth rate of industry indicates that American economy has matured. The author examines the six causes presented before the TNEC as responsible for the fact that "the demands of productive business . . . for new plant reached a kind of plateau in the 1920's and are even lower to-day." The six causes are technological advance, the excess capacity of many industries and of many agricultural crops, economic nationalism, the closing of geographical frontiers, the decline in the growth rate of population, and the psychological effect of a lack of confidence. That American economy, however, has not reached a dead level is all too apparent from the needs of the third of our people who are still ill-housed, ill-fed, and ill-clothed, as well as from the continuing need of conservation, rural electrification, low rental housing, power projects, irrigation, forestry, hospitals, schools, super-highways, research. Although public investment was the gist of the solutions suggested, this solution is still "taboo in orthodox minds." When such minds are defeated by the unyielding facts, *then,* the author concludes, "it may be psychologically possible to work out financial solutions which fit the facts."

THE MOTION PICTURE



THE CRESSET *examines samples of Hollywood offerings.*

NORTHWEST PASSAGE (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer)

This is a real he-man's movie. It will probably thrill you and chill you. The love interest is kept at a bare minimum. We liked that, for a change.

Northwest Passage is a powerful, moving drama of the almost superhuman feat of Rogers' Rangers in making their epic journey to St. Francis and of the successful return of the remnant of the company in the face of hardships and difficulties that will leave you groggy.

The versatile Spencer Tracy, as the intrepid and unkillable Major Rogers, again proves that he is an actor of the first magnitude.

We venture to say that you will enjoy the movie more if you have not previously read the book, for the entire last half of the story is cut out in the screen version, which portrays only the expedition to and from St. Francis—which is enough, in all conscience.

This is a good movie, though. You will enjoy it.

INVISIBLE STRIPES (Paramount)
GREEN HELL (Universal)

These are the sort of movies local theater managers tack on as the second attraction in a double feature bill. In other words, they're Grade B productions. Just keep the titles in mind and stay away. One movie is about Humphrey Bogart as a confidence man attempting to go straight; the other is all about Inca ruins, head-hunting Indians, and South American jungles. We have a hunch Hollywood is ribbing us.

A CHILD IS BORN (Warner Bros.)

Warner Brothers are attempting to make us sociologically minded via the maternity ward. Geraldine Fitzgerald of the Irish Abbey Players does a beautiful piece of acting in a movie that is the sorriest tripe. Verdict? You guess.

DR. EHRLICH'S MAGIC BULLET (Warner Bros.)

We think this is one of the great movies of 1940. You may disagree. It's the story of Dr. Ehrlich's discovery of the formula for the cure of syphilis. Edward G. Robinson, wearing a white beard and playing an old man, does a sound bit of acting. In the movie one of the dramatic moments occurs when Dr. Koch, played by Albert Basserman, must be persuaded of the genuineness of Ehrlich's discovery. Ruth Gordon, Dr. Ehrlich's wife, contributes an outstanding performance as the patient, self-effacing wife. Directed by William Dieterle, the picture contains a great deal of social significance, a rare occurrence, indeed, in Hollywood.

THE BLUE BIRD (20th Century-Fox)

There's something engagingly crazy about Darryl F. Zanuck. He can inject sex into the building of the Suez canal, and he can turn a Maeterlinck fantasy into a Shirley Temple starring vehicle. An expensive one at that. Far be it from us to sneer at Darryl F. Zanuck's idea of what the public wants. We're at a loss.

THE GRAPES OF WRATH (20th Century-Fox)

We had our doubts what Hollywood would do to John Steinbeck's novel. They're dispelled. If anything, John Ford, the director, has done a brilliant job dramatizing the story of the dust bowl refugees. One gets the impression that he told the story photographically first, and then Steinbeck made a verbal record. You know the story by this time. Also all the controversy it has stirred up. We won't go into that. All this reviewer maintains is that once you sit in the darkened theater and watch the Joad epic unfold you will immediately forgive Hollywood all its horrible *Gone With The Wind* epics. Here is a documentary film. No make-up, no elaborate sets, no squishy love scenes, no starring vehicle. The comparatively unknown Jane Darwell, as Ma Joad, ties the story together through her dominating impersonation of the bewildered refugee. We think you will want to see this picture. The strong language has been cut out, and the objectionable scenes are of such a sort that they do not obtrude.

PINOCCHIO (RKO-Disney Productions)

By the time this review is in your hands, you may have seen the picture. We hope you have taken the entire family. *Pinocchio* is a better movie than *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.* It has implications and turns that

are truly startling. It is unnecessary to list the outstanding characters. Nor the scenes. Everyone will think his choice the correct and proper one. As for technique, photography, music, color—space forbids even a brief comment. Walt Disney belongs to the great American artists.

THE HOUSEKEEPER'S DAUGHTER (United Artists)

The title is misleading. Actually, Joan Bennett, who plays the rôle of the housekeeper's daughter, is by no means either the most interesting or the most important character in the story. Needless to say, we were glad beyond measure when we made this discovery, because we do not set great store by La Bennett's ability as an actress. Side-splitting comedy is mingled in an adroit manner with skillfully contrived excitement.

THE EARL OF CHICAGO (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer)

Silky, a Chicago gangster, inherits a British earldom. First a Chicago criminal, then of the British nobility. The transition is remarkably portrayed. The movie is noteworthy for Robert Montgomery's acting as Silky. For adults.

THE INVISIBLE MAN RETURNS (Universal)

If you have a penchant for horror seasoned to a generous extent with fun, you will enjoy this picture. It is interesting to see what blood-curdling effects can be produced by means of trick-photography.

LETTERS to the EDITOR

Agreement

SIR:

Paging the December issue of THE CRESSET, I notice the comments and discussions on neutrality, comments running through your book and magazine reviews regarding the European situation, and I readily agree with them in their essence.

THE CRESSET, it seems to me, should be welcomed and appreciated by all Lutherans and Christians in general as a delightful visitor each month. It is leavening in its function after the perusal of thousands of pages of secular, social, cultural, educational, and political magazines and books.

FRANK B. MILLER
Morehead, Kentucky

A Little History

SIR:

With reference to my article on "The German Colonies" in the January 1939 CRESSET, there is a Nazi sympathizer in the Argentine who intermittently, throughout the year, has been demanding "proof that Germany had no colony left at the end of the first year of the world war."

We would have ignored his more or less denunciatory letters were it not for this that the gentleman claims to speak for others also. Hence, as briefly as possible, we herewith present the historical data, which anyone can verify in any public library.

Togo. A British force under Lt. Col. F. C. Bryant, aided by French Dahomey detachments, completely conquered Togoland during August 1914. The Germans blew up their radio station at Atakpame and promptly surrendered. Germany had no more Togo after the very first month of the War.

The Cameroons. August 6 and 7, 1914 the French capture Bonga and Singa, forestalling all further German offensives. The Port of Duala surrenders September 26. Edea, German general headquarters, is captured October 26. The German administrative capital, Bueau, is occupied at the end of 1914. All remaining territory is taken from German control during early 1915; any remaining German belligerents having retreated to Spanish Guinea by July 31, 1915, sniping on the way.

Southwest Africa. The entire southern area and capital is conquered April 20, 1915. Windhoek falls May 12, 1915. On July 9, 1915, Germany completely surrenders Southwest Africa.

East Africa. Here the Germans were able to maintain a strong offensive until July, 1915, when the blowing up of "SMS Koenigsberg" breaks all German resistance and

makes complete and continuous retreat mandatory. At the end of the first year of the war the British and Belgians are in control of East Africa, although the German commander manages to carry on a desperate guerilla warfare until he succeeds in eluding the British by slipping across the Portugese border in the dark of night in November, 1917.

On the basis of the military and tactical history of the colonial campaigns we reiterate:

1. That Germany was minus her colonies at the end of one year of the war.

2. That the natives were glad enough to throw off the yoke of their "cultured protectors."

3. That this was accomplished so rapidly was because of that bad colonial management so amply substantiated by official German sources. Hitler declared that he would do things "differently" when and if he got the colonies back.

We are sorry to take up this additional space, dear CRESSET, but we ought to straighten out the record for our lone opponent and his friends, since they asked for it.

R. T. DU BRAU

Los Angeles, California

What Is Poetry?

SIR:

I have allowed my hair to grow to my shoulders, have walked in shady lanes and by babbling brooks. I have looked at wild flowers of all varieties and have listened to the chirping of birds. I have even gazed longingly into the eyes of a cow—said to be beautiful. All in vain. In spite of all my efforts to catch the poetic feelings of the day, I can't appreciate this modern poetry—not even the poetry of THE CRESSET'S own Helen Myrtis Lange. I suppose the poetry means something. It must have some sense and maybe also some beauty, but what this sense and this beauty are, I can't make out.

In despair I appeal to you. Will you devote a paragraph or an article in one of your next issues to an explanation of Modern Poetry? Maybe if we "low-brows"—and I know there are others who like me can't understand these modern poems—would know the underlying principles, so that we could see what the poets were driving at, we might be able to understand them. We may even learn to like these poems as we learned to eat olives and to read the articles of your Music Critic.

DARMAN NALGRID

Cleveland, Ohio

The Wide Open Spaces

SIR:

May I address a few words to the writer of the Alembic? He is a very good columnist and sees more than perhaps a good columnist should. I like those things, too, which he saw in the countryside and country towns. Often I have wondered what other people, especially those of greater ability than I, see as they wander about in the countryside, or anywhere, for that matter. I speak of the Southwest and Far West, for that is the only country I know, for it is here I have always lived.

I have no longing to see the great cities, the great Fairs. The reason, no doubt, is that always I have lived outdoors. Here, where we run a few cows, there are canyons, and greasewood, and sage, and sandstone cliffs, and deserty winds from off the Mojave. In the level land below are orange trees and green fields of beans and tomatoes. Often I have read of the valleys of Italy that nestle in the southern foothills of the Apennines; of the dark blue of the Italian sky; of the warm winds that arise from somewhere in Africa and warm the Great Sea. I'm sure our valley must be its counterpart. At night, when the wind blows from all the distant, dry Mojave, and one looks up into the heavens, it seems each star is glittering with all its might, and the Milky Way blazes a path across the sky. There is no star that is hidden by a murky atmosphere, for they all seem to twinkle so merrily. There seems to be a kind of holiness that dwells in lonely, deep canyons, where silence and time are rudely awakened if you so much as whisper too loud. The wind will not awaken them, nor the wild coyote, nor the Hereford cow, nor horses, nor even the thunder; . . . but an alien human voice, or a shot, or a distant airplane; . . . these are alien to the canyon walls. Someday men will drive silence from these canyons. I wonder where it will go to then.

Wherever there are mountains, there are cows; and where there are cows there are cowboys and rodeos. So he saw a rodeo? And he seemed to like it! That's swell! If he goes to more he will even get acquainted and like the cowboys. We have a small chute of our own, and on lazy afternoons we rope and ride a few steers. My older brother is real happy today because his mare at long last had a horse colt. She's always been having mare colts.

Has he ever visited an old cattleman and his family? I mean in the Southwest. He would enjoy it, and might even buy a little ranch of his own. Of course, as there are different kinds of cows, so there are different kinds of cattlemen. I meant he should visit real cowmen, those who have always been in the business. They'll naturally be a little broke, or a little worse, but they'll treat him o.k.

Perhaps some time he will want to ride a steer of his own. Maybe he's too old to ride anymore, but from his writings I think he's still young enough. I know a man who is over sixty and still rides Brahmas. So when he rides, he must be sure to jump off before he gets to the fence, or the steer might rub him against it. It's lots of fun, and he should be sure to learn on a steer without horns.

I hope, as the years pass by, he will visit more places in this Southwest country. Has he ever been to the Imperial Valley on the border of Mexico? It sort of gets one twisted to see canals of water flowing through miles of white sand dunes. And nearby are the Chocolate Mountains without one blade of grass. There is a mystery and a legend among these mountains, but I don't know what it is.

I do know that one night another boy and I camped on a sand dune near a canal. There was a little bridge over this canal, or hy-line as it is

called, and the moon was at its full. Beneath us the muddy, red water flowed almost silently, except for a few gurgling contortions. We hung our feet into the water, and we dreamed we were in India; for here are birds that look like the flamingoes; here are rice-fields and sunset mists; and here there are many Hindus, too. There are mud-pots that boil by subterranean fires, and steam that smells as I suppose a burning Hindu pyre would smell on the banks of the murky Ganges. . . . Something was floating down the channel toward us. Then we saw its features roughly outlined by the moon. There was a coat . . . and behind the coat came some trousers and in between, wrapped loosely with old clothes, was a body! My heart almost stood still! The body turned over in the current and looked us in the face. . . . "It's old clothes, with more old clothes in between." My friend was right, and it was o.k. by me.

And if he likes to swim, some of the hy-lines flow about five miles an hour for many miles. The water averages about four feet in depth, and every once in a while there is a hole in the tules where you can get out. No one lives around here for miles, so his time is his own.

It is not always the extremes of nature that inspire. The little rolling hills, or rocky streams, or the first star of evening, are they not as beautiful in their simplicity as the Grand Canyon is mighty with its awe and terror?

A READER

Somewhere in New Mexico

Vatican Representative

SIR:

THE CRESSET (Feb., '40) in general and "The Alembic" in particular scored a hit so far as the appointment by President Roosevelt of a representative to the Vatican is concerned.

In the light of history as well as of the American principles governing Church and State the appointment must be denounced and Mr. Roosevelt requested to recall his "ambassador to Rome."

Unfortunately the matter cannot be disposed of so simply as that. It may be assumed that the President had given some thought to the implications of the appointment before making his decision, and also that he was aware of unfavorable reaction which would result from the appointment: that his step would be construed as a concession to the Catholic Church.

The appointment is typically Rooseveltian. On numerous occasions the President has taken the liberty to break precedents and traditions. He seems to delight in being the storm-center of controversy. As long as he has sufficient reasons to justify himself personally he likes to see the chips fall. No one can effectively refute his contention that the appointment is not in the interest of peace, at least as far as he, Mr. President, is concerned.

If, as a loyal citizen of the U. S. A., Mr. Taylor exercises his influence on the Vatican, to wit, in re the respective functions of Church and State, the appointment could become a blessing. If his appointment is used

by the Vatican as a pretext for furthering the aims of the Catholic Church the appointment would prove a tragedy.

How the appointment of a representative to the Vatican can further the cause of peace is not apparent to THE CRESSET or to the readers of THE CRESSET. We can only say that if the appointment *does* succeed in restoring peace we are ready to vote a third term.

R. H. KRETZSCHMAR
St. Joseph, Missouri

Gone With the Wind

SIR:

The writer agrees with the reviewer that this picture is a masterpiece in technical skill as to technicolor photography.

As to the moral atmosphere, it would seem that the character of Rhett Butler would in modern days be nothing but a common everyday racketeer.

You say, "But sin is not glorified"; however, the character of Scarlett surely teaches the spectator many new tricks of the trade. The details of her escapades by contrast do not compare with the beautiful character of her mother to which so little picture space was given, although the book, if my memory serves me, impressed me with her character.

Therefore, I cannot agree with your statement that the screen version includes every important and well-remembered scene of the book.

How about the negro mammy which you do not mention? To me she not only displayed acting ability but also taught some common sense.

I do not believe that it is a "must" picture.

WALTER H. KROEHNKE
St. Louis, Missouri

SIR:

I'm bewildered at your manner of rating films. Here your reviewer goes into the deep end on "Gone With the Wind," a movie which is a rehash of every southern theme since Eliza crossed the ice, and skirts the edge of morals with a skitterish glance. Do you know that the Legion of Decency has given "Gone With the Wind" just a nod? You come along and say: Gals, you've just gotta see this picture. Did a woman write that review? A year's subscription to THE CRESSET, to any one you designate, that it wasn't a theologian who wrote that review. F'land sakes, Lindy Lou, look at THE CRESSET!

J. V. MATCHETTE
New York, New York

SIR:

Shut ma mouf! D'Cresset's gawn southawn. . . . Seriously, here was a chance for THE CRESSET's film reviewer to use his customary acid with a little more severity. Don't tell me that the same reviewer who has punctured most of the current Hollywood offerings went over-board on this one! It just doesn't ring true. Furthermore, it's absolutely impossible to be glued to the seat four hours because there's an intermission of ten minutes. . . .

LEONARD FEELEY
New York, New York

Contributors—Problems—Final Notes

The Editor's Lamp

"A PASTOR Looks at Life" is the first of a series of articles which we hope to present at more or less regular intervals. The relation of the pulpit to modern life is undoubtedly one of the most pressing questions of our day. Although only clergymen are contributing to the series at the present time, we hope to present the viewpoint of the laity in future issues.

Guest reviewers this month are Thomas Coates of Chicago (*Union Now*) and W. E. Lammerts (*Flowering Earth*), Geneticist at the Armstrong Nurseries at Ontario, California.

A goodly portion of our Letter Column this month is devoted to a bubbling controversy concerning the merits and demerits of GWTW. Fortunately, or unfortunately, we have no opinion in the matter. Our reviewer went to see the film, sat for four hours, and enjoyed himself. In the review he said so. Others may disagree, but he should be given the privilege of reporting his reactions.

Particularly during the winter months our Letter Column threatens to run away with the remainder of the magazine. While we are deeply grateful for the communications concerning various matters, we appeal once more for brevity. At times it is somewhat difficult to exercise editorial privileges. It is only with great reluctance that we "cut" an excellent communication. We should therefore be very grateful if the "cutting" would be done at the point of origin.

During the past months we have received an increasing number of requests to reprint individual sections of THE CRESSET. Perhaps it should be said again that our readers have the privilege of quotation—of course, with the usual credit line. This also applies to quotation over the radio or in public addresses. The managing editor approves from the practical point of view.

FORTHCOMING ISSUES

I. In "Notes and Comment" the editors will continue their brief comments on the world of public affairs and modern thought.

II. Major articles during the coming months will include:

DIVORCE
GAMBLING IN GRANDMA'S GOWN
EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

III. In future issues the editors will review, among many others, the following books:

SHRINE OF THE SILVER DOLLAR ..... *John L. Spivak*
THE LOON FEATHER ..... *Iola Fuller*
IT WAS LIKE THIS ..... *Hervey Allen*
EUROPE TO LET ..... *Storm Jameson*
THE TREES ..... *Conrad Richter*
SINCE YESTERDAY ..... *Frederick Lewis Allen*
RURAL ROADS TO SECURITY .. *Luigi Ligutti and Rev. John C. Rawe*
TROUBLE IN JULY ..... *Erskine Caldwell*
THE AMERICAN NOVEL 1789-1939 ..... *Carl Van Doren*
HEIL HUNGER! ..... *Martin Gumpert*
COMPETITION FOR EMPIRE ..... *Walter L. Dorn*
CALVIN COOLIDGE ..... *Claude M. Fuess*
INSIDE EUROPE: 1940 WAR EDITION ..... *John Gunther*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